THE BIBLE FOR HOME & SCHOOL

COLOSSIANS AND EPHESIANS

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THE BIBLE FOR HOME AND SCHOOL

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THE EPISTLES TO THE COLOSSIANS AND TO THE EPHESIANS

GROSS ALEXANDER

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THE

EPISTLES TO THE COLOSSIANS AND TO THE EPHESIANS

BY

GROSS ALEXANDER, S.T.D.

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To

THE MEMORY

OF MY BROTHER

H. CLAY ALEXANDER

A GIFTED SURGEON

A NOBLE MAN

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COLOSSIANS

GROSS ALEXANDER

INTRODUCTION

THE Epistle to the Colossians is comparatively brief; but it is unique among the writings of the New Testament, and its importance and value are out of all proportion to its brevity. In consequence of the difficulty of its main subject and the obscurity of the form of false teaching which it was intended to guard against, it has not received the attention and appreciation to which it is entitled. In short, it has been comparatively neglected.

I. THE COLOSSIAN CHURCH

The church at the city of Colossæ on the banks of the Lycus in Asia Minor was not founded by Paul; for several passages of the epistle imply that he had never seen them, that he was personally unknown to them (1 : 4 and 2 : 1). Moreover, there is no mention of a visit of Paul to Colossæ in the accounts of his missionary journeys in the book of Acts. It is probable that the founder of the church was Epaphras (an abbreviated form of Epaphroditus). This is implied in 1 : 7, where it is said, "since ye heard of the true grace of God, even as ye learned it of Epaphras." It is likely that Epaphras had learned it from Paul. It is certain that he preached Paul's gospel. In several passages of the epistle Paul strongly expresses his approval of the way that Epaphras had taught the Colossians. He refers to him in the opening paragraph as "our beloved fellow-servant, who is a faithful minister of Christ on *our* behalf." The pronoun here used practically implies that Epaphras was a representative, possibly an actual appointee of Paul.

As to the complexion of the church at Colossæ, it was

evidently composed of Gentiles. This is indicated by the general tone and tenor of the epistle, and it is specifically implied in such passages as 1 : 21, 27, and 2 : 13. This is not disproved by the fact that the doctrines of the false teachers which are so vigorously opposed in the epistle were of a Jewish character. The same is true of the epistle to the Galatians, though it is certain that the churches in Galatia were composed entirely of Gentiles.

II. The Occasion of the Epistle

We learn from the epistle itself that Epaphras had gone to Rome and was with Paul when he wrote it, for in 4 : 12 he is mentioned as one of those who send greetings to the Colossians, "Epaphras, *who is one of you*, saluteth you." Doubtless he had gone to Rome for the very purpose of laying before Paul "the state of the church" and especially to tell him of the danger to which the believers there were exposed on account of the false teachings of certain propagandists of some new-fangled system which they were trying to persuade them to accept instead of the gospel as they had learned it from Epaphras. Paul refers to them in 2 : 4, where he says, "Let no one delude you with persuasiveness of speech." Still more clear and specific is his reference to them in 2 : 8, "Take heed lest there shall be any one that maketh spoil of you *through his philosophy* and vain deceit," and in 2 : 18, "Let no man rob you of your prize by a voluntary humility and worshipping of the angels . . . vainly puffed up by his fleshly mind and not holding fast the Head."

The appearance of these false teachers and their energetic efforts to seduce the Colossian Christians from the gospel they had heard and received were the occasion of the epistle; and the character of their teachings gives the key-note to the letter and furnishes the key to its interpretation. It becomes important, then, to ascertain, if possible, what this new teaching was.

Bishop Lightfoot holds that it was a form of Gnosticism

with Jewish modifications; and he makes a very ingenious and able argument in support of this view. But it is claimed by later writers that it is not necessary to assume the presence of Gnosticism in order to explain the contents of the epistle. All the passages and references which, according to Lightfoot, require the assumption of Gnostic teaching can be explained, it is claimed, by what we know of the views that were prevalent among the Jews of that day concerning angels. The New Testament is itself, in large part, the source of this knowledge. What is there said will be a matter of surprise to one who has never had occasion to look up the various references and put them together; but it is not necessary to cite them here.

As Lightfoot and those who follow him, as Moule and others, have doubtless made too much of Gnosticism in their setting and interpretation of the epistle, those who reject that view have erred, and very naturally, in going too far in the other direction and have made too much of their angelology and angelolatry. They even go so far as to hold that "the elements of the world," referred to by Paul in Col. 2 : 8, are "the elemental spirits which animate all material things and are so called from the elements which they animate"; and they are called "dominions, principalities, powers," etc., from their sphere of authority. (See Peake's *Commentary on Colossians* in the Expositor's Greek Testament and the article by Massie on "Elements" in Hastings' *Dictionary of the Bible*.)

If Lightfoot and his followers are too specific and explicit on the one hand, the angelologists are too explicit and specific on the other. They all know too much. Chrysostom somewhere says that it is often wiser not to know than to know, the aptness and force of which one can appreciate when reading Peake and Massie. The following statement is about as definite as can be safely risked, and it probably gives the correct view: The false system which was promulgated at Colossæ and which Paul so vigorously and so vehemently opposed was on its doctrinal side a

mixture of Jewish Kabbalistic views with current oriental speculation and theosophy, of which Asia Minor was and had been a hotbed from the time whereof the memory of man ran not to the contrary. It appears to have taught the mediation of angels and other mysterious powers of the unseen world in the creation of the world, the giving of the law, the work of redemption, and the processes of salvation; and so it obscured, if it did not exclude, Christ altogether.

On its practical side, it combined a merciless asceticism (Col. 2 : 23) and a strict observance of Jewish rites (2 : 11, 16) with the worship of angels (2 : 18) and an arrogant claim to special and superior enlightenment (2 : 8, 18). Its one special danger lay in the fact that it obscured or even denied the unique glory of Christ, the ground and agent and goal of creation, and the sole mediator through faith in whom the Christian was delivered from under the power of darkness (1 : 13), raised into newness of life (3 : 1), and made partaker of his glory (3 : 4).

Any attempt to go further than this, to fix definitely the false teaching, to identify it with any one definite system, or to give it a single specific name is attended with difficulties and sure to be misleading.

At any rate the character of the heresy and the serious danger which it threatened were such as to make it necessary for Paul, the tireless watchman of the infant Church, to make an explicit, strong, full, formal statement of the supremacy of Christ, — of his relation to God, to creation, to the universe, and to the Church. That is the theme of the epistle. It bears the same relation to the other epistles that the Fourth Gospel bears to the other Gospels. It is the Christological epistle as that is the Christological gospel.

A heresy doctrinally and substantially similar to that which made it necessary to write the Colossian epistle and to make the statement and exposition there found of the supremacy of Christ, made it necessary to write the Fourth Gospel in order to set forth the God-consciousness and supremacy of Jesus as there found.

This does not mean that Paul had developed a new view and doctrine of Christ, different from that which he previously held and taught. By no means. We know from his previous epistles that he held all along substantially the view of Christ which he states and expounds in Colossians. If any one doubts this, let him read carefully Gal. 1 : 16; 2 : 20; Rom. 1 : 3, 4; 1 Cor. 8 : 6; 2 Cor. 4 : 4; 8 : 9; Phil. 2 : 6, 9–11. In all these passages he assumes the supremacy of Christ as a matter of course.

The last passage is here cited with the others because, though it was not written as long before Colossians as the other epistles quoted, it was written without any polemical purpose and in such a way as to make it manifest that it expressed the view of Christ which was taken for granted, not only by Paul himself, but by the churches which he had founded or taught. There is not in the passage a word or a suggestion which would betray that this view of Christ was new or strange to Paul or his readers. The self-evident reason why he did not make in the previous epistles an express and formal statement of the deity and supremacy of Christ is precisely this, that it was universally accepted and so no occasion had then arisen for it, as had now arisen in the Colossian church by reason of the presence and teachings there of those who sought to ignore, obscure, or deny the deity of Paul's Lord and Christ. This consideration, let it be said incidentally, is sufficient to refute the notion of some few (as Holtzmann, Von Soden, etc.) that the Christological passages of our epistle were not written by Paul.

III. Authorship and Date

Indeed, the epistle is so characteristically and evidently Pauline that it is now accepted as Paul's with practical unanimity among the best scholars. To undertake to show exhaustively that it is Pauline, in its point of view, its fundamental conceptions, its spirit, its style, its grammatical peculiarities, its figures, and, in view of its

date and subject-matter, even in its vocabulary, would l to quote practically the whole epistle and to anticipate th exposition.

As to place and date, the epistle was certainly written at Rome and probably in the year 62 or 63. Jülicher, who is by no means a conservative, but who is recognized as perhaps the foremost living writer on New Testament Introduction, says (*Introduction to the New Testament*, p. 131), "We must assign a common date to Philemon, Colossians, and Ephesians, and in all probability Paul wrote them at Rome in the year 62 or 63."

IV. Analysis of the Epistle

Structural symmetry and regular logical arrangement are hardly to be expected in a letter; but it may be helpful, in tracing the course of the Apostle's thought, to have a general outline of the contents of the epistle, something like this:

I. The Salutation (1 : 1, 2).

II. Thanksgiving for the cheering news brought to him by Epaphras of their participation in the blessings of the universal gospel, their faith in Christ, and their love toward all Christians (1 : 3–8).

III. The assurance of his unceasing prayer that they might have complete knowledge of the will of God in order that they might live in a manner that would in all things be pleasing to him (1 : 9–14).

IV. The relations of him through whom they have received and experienced the blessings of redemption, to God, to the universe, and to the Church (1 : 15–20), and this in implied contrast with the fictitious angelic mediators:

1. He is the visible manifestation of the invisible God (1 : 15a).

2. He not only existed prior to creation, he is the ground, and the agent and the goal of creation, as he is the head and upholder of the universe (1 : 15b–17).
3. He is the head also of the new spiritual creation, the Church (1 : 18).
4. He is the embodiment of the totality of the attributes and powers of deity (1 : 19).
5. He is the one mediator through whom God reconciles all beings and things in the universe unto himself (1 : 20).

V. The actual experience of reconciliation on the part of the Colossians and the meaning and purpose of it (1 : 21–23a).

VI. This leads up to a statement of Paul's personal agency in the reconciliation of the Gentile world to God (1 : 23b–29).

VII. The emptiness and futility of the false teaching in contrast with the all-sufficiency of Christ (2 : 1–23).
1. Paul's agony of anxiety for them in view of the danger they were in (2 : 1–8).
2. The absolute fulness of Christ (2 : 9) and the full provision for all their needs in him (2 : 10–15).
3. This in contrast with the absolute emptiness of the so-called "philosophy" of the theosophists (2 : 8) and the absolute futility of all those observances, practices, and asceticisms which they imposed (2 : 16–23).

VIII. What is involved in their experience of having died with Christ to the world (2 : 20) and having been raised with him into new life (3 : 1–17).
1. Heavenly-mindedness, "Seek heaven, think heaven" (3 : 1–4).
2. Things to be abandoned for good and all (3 : 5–11).
3. Things to be made part of character (3 : 12–17).

IX. Social relations, especially domestic relations, to be regulated in accordance with our subjection to Jesus as Lord (3 : 18–4 : 1).
   1. Wives to be in subjection to their husbands (3 : 18).
   2. Husbands to love their wives (3 : 19).
   3. Children to be obedient to their parents (3 : 20).
   4. Fathers to be patient and kind to their children (3 : 21).
   5. Slaves to render hearty obedience to their masters (3 : 22–25).
   6. Masters to treat their slaves with justice and equality (4 : 1).

X. Practical instructions (4 : 2–6).
   1. Perseverance in prayer (4 : 2–4).
   2. Their conduct and bearing toward those who were not believers (4 : 5, 6).

XI. Conclusion (4 : 7–18).
   1. The mission and messages of Tychicus and Onesimus (4 : 7–9).
   2. Greetings from Paul and those brethren who were with him at Rome (4 : 10–17).
   3. Paul's own personal good-by written with his own manacled hand (4 : 18).

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Abbott is very good, but his matter and style are both cumbersome. His Commentary is a haystack, but there are many fine needles in it, if one can spare the time to find them.

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Meyer is always great. He has done more for the exegesis of the New Testament than any other one man in ancient or modern times. All who have come after him are indebted to him. It is easy to trace his influence through them all. He never dodges or shirks. He always faces the problem squarely. In this sense you can say of Meyer what Paul says of charity — he never faileth. But he is not infallible. He does not always give the right interpretation. In Colossians, for example, he is too much influenced by the eschatological point of view — the parousia, etc.

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See also especially DENNEY, Jesus and the Gospel, pp. 31–36.

THE EPISTLE TO THE COLOSSIANS

I. The Salutation, 1 : 1, 2

1. Paul, °an apostle of Christ Jesus °through the will of 1:1
2. God, °and Timothy [1] our brother, °[2] to the saints and

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[1] Gr. *the brother.* [2] Or, *to those that are at Colossæ, holy and faithful brethren in Christ*

The Theme of the Epistle: The Deity, the Supremacy, and the All-sufficiency of Jesus Christ

1. **An apostle.** This is the word by which Paul designates himself in all his epistles except 1 and 2 Thes., at the time of the writing of which he had not come into a consciousness of the full significance of his position as it was later brought home to him by outward events and inward experiences; and Phil. and Philem., both of which were letters of personal friendship rather than official communications. **Through the will of God.** Through an act of God's selection and appointment, which was an expression of his will. This also is usual, though not invariable, in Paul's salutations. It was intended to indicate the divine source of his commission, to justify his going before men with such a message as his was, and to give weight to his authority especially among those who composed the churches. This was much needed, for example, at Colossæ, as we shall see. **And Timothy.** Who was with Paul in prison at Rome, as is shown by the similar greeting in Phil. and Philem.

2. **To the saints and faithful brethren in Christ.** This rendering takes the adjective which means *holy* as a noun and translates it *saints*, which is quite in accordance with Paul's usage. But as it is here closely coupled with another adjective, namely, *faithful*, it is better to render it as in the margin, or still better, *to the holy and*

faithful brethren in Christ *which are* at Colossæ: °Grace to you and peace from God our Father.

II. Thanksgiving for the Cheering News of their Faith and Love, 1:3–8

3. °We give thanks to God the Father of our Lord Jesus
4. Christ, °praying always for you, °having heard of your faith in Christ Jesus, and of the love which ye have
5. toward all the saints, °because of the hope which is laid

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faithful brethren in Christ who are at Colossæ. In other places where the word here translated *saints* is joined with another adjective, it is taken as an adjective and is translated *holy*. See 1 : 22; 3 : 12; Eph. 1 : 4. **Grace to you and peace.** This is exactly the order of the words in Greek. Here grace is "the merciful kindness in virtue of which God exercises his holy influence upon the souls of believers, keeps and strengthens them in Christian faith, knowledge, and love, and moves them to the practice of all Christian virtues." Peace is "the tranquillity of a soul assured of its salvation through Christ and so fearing nothing from God, and content with its earthly lot of whatsoever sort that may be."

3. **We give thanks.** It was Paul's all but invariable habit, when writing either to a church or an individual, to express his gratitude to God for their faith and love. He did this, not because it was a habit, but because he was so deeply in earnest in extending the knowledge of the Gospel among men and bringing them to salvation that he was overjoyed when he got good news from them — and he poured out his heart in thanksgiving. **Praying always for you.** The word *always* can better be taken with *give thanks;* the rendering then would be: We always give thanks to God when we pray for you.

4. **Having heard.** Since the time when we heard. **Of your faith . . . and the love.** Their love was the effect of their faith and a proof of the genuineness of it. This is essentially the principle which underlies what is said in 1 John 3 : 14, "We know we have passed from death unto life because we love the brethren." Their love was a proof of their regeneration, and their regeneration was the effect of their faith.

5. **Because of the hope.** If these words were taken with those which immediately precede, it would mean that their heavenly reward was the motive of their love, *i.e.*, they had love because they were going to be rewarded for it, which would be to assign a selfish motive for that which is the essence of unselfishness — love. This would be self-

up for you in the heavens, °whereof ye heard before
6. °in the word of the truth of the gospel, °which is come unto you; even as it is also in all the world °bearing fruit and increasing, °as *it doth* in you also, °since the day ye heard °and knew the grace of God °in truth;

Jn. 17:17; Eph. 1:13; 2 Tim. 2:15; Jas. 1:18.

contradictory. These words *because of the hope* are to be taken with *we give thanks* and the meaning is this: We thank God that there is a glorious reward laid up for those who have such faith and love as we have heard you have. **Whereof ye heard before.** Of which hope you heard when the gospel was first preached to you by Epaphras. **In the word of the truth of the gospel.** The proclamation of the glorious hope was a part of the message which was contained in the true gospel which you have heard.

6. **Which is come unto you; even as it is also in all the world.** The gospel which was preached to the Colossians at the first by Epaphras was not that perverted caricature of it which was taught in that particular locality by certain false teachers; it was the true gospel, the same which had been preached everywhere in the world. **Bearing fruit and increasing.** It was not only preached everywhere in the world, it was everywhere vindicating itself by the way it was bearing fruit and extending its widening influence, by its inner working and its outward extension. "The gospel is not like plants that exhaust themselves in bearing fruit and then wither away." And its external extension is in keeping with its internal vitality. **As it doth in you also.** Before, he had said the gospel had come to them; here he says it was bearing fruit and increasing among them. It was the true and the ecumenical gospel they had received formerly from Epaphras, and it was, according to the report that Epaphras had brought him, also producing fruit among them and diffusing itself through them, as everywhere else it was doing. **Since the day ye heard.** Both the fruits and the progress of the gospel had been continuous among the Colossians since the day they heard its glad tidings. **And knew the grace of God.** Not only had they heard it, they understood it, they had apprehended it in its true sense as a message of the free grace of God, and not a system of outward observances and of self-imposed asceticisms, such as the false teachers were trying to introduce. Just as the Galatians had been tempted by intruding theological vagabonds to substitute obsolete rites and outward forms for the gospel of God's grace and the grace of God's gospel, and so had "fallen from grace" (Gal. 5:4), even so at Colossæ a school of theological heresy peddlers were trying to draw away believers from the gospel of grace and the grace of the gospel to a system of ascetic practices and outward observances. **In truth.**

7. °even as ye learned of Epaphras our beloved fellow-
servant, who is a faithful minister of Christ °on [1] our
8. behalf, °who also declared unto us °your love in the
Spirit.

III. The Assurance of his Prayer for them, 1 : 9–14

9. °For this cause we also, since the day we heard *it*,
do not cease °to pray and make request for you, °that

[1] Many ancient authorities read *your*.

The emphasis with which Paul insists that they had heard the true gospel implies his hitherto unexpressed sense of the presence at Colossæ of a false system and false teachers.

7. **Even as ye learned of Epaphras.** Paul cannot be too explicit and emphatic in assuring them that the gospel which they had heard and accepted was the true gospel, the only gospel; and now still more narrowly to identify it he adds: It is the very gospel that Epaphras taught you. Epaphras is here in prison with me now as I write these words (cf. 4 : 12 and Philem. 23). He has told me all about the gospel he preached to you and all about the fruits it has produced among you. **On our behalf.** The reading *our* is better attested than *your*, and it means that Epaphras in his ministry had accomplished a work that was in accord with and furtherance of Paul's mission as apostle to the Gentiles. It is more than possible that he had himself been converted under Paul's ministry.

8. **Who also declared unto us.** Here Paul declares in so many words that it was from their own evangelist and pastor that he had gotten at first hand the knowledge of the situation in the Colossian church which called forth this epistle. **Your love in the Spirit.** This is a testimony to that supernatural spiritual love which was one of the fruits of the gospel at Colossæ; and it is here distinguished from any kind of natural human love by the expression, *in the Spirit.*

9. **For this cause.** Because of the good news which Paul had received through Epaphras concerning the Colossian believers. This refers probably to all that precedes from verse 4. **To pray and make request for you.** The former is the general word for prayer, the latter is specific. It is here followed by the mention of the specific thing which Paul specifically asks for them, namely, **that ye may be filled with the knowledge of his will.** Literally translated these words mean, that ye may be filled *as to, in respect to*, the knowledge, etc.; that is, that your knowledge of his will may be full, or, that you may

ye may be filled with the knowledge °of his will °in
10. all spiritual wisdom and understanding, °to walk worthily of the Lord °[1] unto all pleasing, °bearing fruit

[1] Or, *unto all pleasing, in every good work, bearing fruit and increasing &c.*

have full knowledge of his will. The words "fill," "filling," "fulness," are used with striking frequency in this and the epistle to the Ephesians. One reason probably is that Paul himself had doubtless reached a richer, fuller stage of spiritual experience at this time. He certainly says in Phil. 3 : 12 that he was pressing on. What he teaches in these later epistles, what he exhorts his readers to seek, and what he prays for for them was doubtless the reflex of his own deepening experience. This consideration will afford much help in the interpretation of his words. The word here used by Paul for knowledge is stronger than the simple, ordinary word. It signifies knowledge that is true and thorough. "Knowledge which grasps and penetrates its object" (Meyer); "it is precise and correct knowledge" (Thayer). The simple word and the stronger word are used in order in 1 Cor. 13 : 12, "Now I know in part, but then I shall know," etc. The simple word in Rom. 1 : 21, the stronger word in Rom. 1 : 28. **Of his will.** The ability always to discern and interpret the will of God in one's inner experiences and in the practical affairs of life more than anything else marks and measures the differences among men in respect to their real ethical and spiritual state and character. Hence the insistent emphasis that Paul everywhere puts on knowing the will of God. See Rom. 12 : 2; Eph. 5 : 10, 17; compare also Jn. 7 : 17 and Heb. 5 : 14. **In all spiritual wisdom and understanding.** That is, consisting in or manifesting itself in. The word "spiritual" belongs to both nouns. "Wisdom" is the general word and means knowledge of practical affairs applied to practical ends, while "understanding" is more specific and means that close discernment which sees the relative bearings and implications of things. Literally, it means a bringing or putting things together, instead of seeing each one in isolation and without relation.

10. **To walk worthily of the Lord.** Their being filled with knowledge of the will of God and with all wisdom and understanding was not an end in itself. It had another and an intensely practical end: it was in order to right living, high living, living that would do no dishonor to, but be worthy of, the Lord himself. To have knowledge and discernment is not character; to live in a manner worthy of him who is our Lord is. **Unto all pleasing**, so as to please him, not in some things and in some ways, as nearly everybody does, but in every way and in everything, as Paul did. **Bearing fruit.** This participle

°in every good work, °and increasing [1]in the knowledge
11. of God; °[2]strengthened [3]with all power, °according
to the might of his glory, °unto all patience and long-
12. suffering °with joy; °giving thanks unto the Father,

[1] Or, *by* [2] Gr. *made powerful.* [3] Or, *in*

and the three which follow define four ways in which they are to live worthily of the Lord and to please God. **In every good work.** This defines the way in which they are to *bear fruit*, namely, in every form of good work. It includes all outward activity. **And increasing in the knowledge of God.** This refers to progress in the inner life which may all be comprehended in the expanding knowledge of God. As was to be expected, the stronger word for knowledge is here used. The participle may be more closely related to the preceding one, *bearing fruit*, than with the two following; that is, it may be in a way subordinate to it with this meaning: Bearing fruit in every form of good work and *so, by that means*, increasing in the knowledge of God. "If any man wills *to do* his will he shall know," etc. Obedience is, at least, *an* organ of knowledge.

11. **Strengthened with all power.** This participle has a certain hortatory force from the preceding context, as the other participles in this group have; and so it is middle rather than passive voice, and it means "getting yourselves strengthened" or at any rate, "letting yourselves be strengthened." At the same time that you bear fruit and increase in the knowledge of God, you are to get yourself continually strengthened or to let yourself be continually strengthened, or, more strictly, empowered or made powerful (as the margin) with all the power that is available, all the power that God has to give. **According to the might of his glory.** That is, power is to be supplied in a manner correspondent with the might that befits the glory of God. **Unto all patience and longsuffering.** This equipment with divine power is not, as we might have expected, said to be given with a view to deeds of prowess and heroism, but for the practice of the passive virtue of patient endurance and perseverance as opposed to cowardice or despondency, and humble meekness and forbearance as opposed to retaliation or revenge. These really put the greater strain on the Christian's strength, while the possession and exemplification of them work a deeper impression and conviction in its beholders than brilliant deeds of heroism. **With joy.** And all this not in a spirit of sourness or sullenness, but of joyfulness. For this they would need the empowering that God works, but it would be a demonstration of overcoming the world.

12. **Giving thanks unto the Father.** This is the last of the four

°who made [1] us meet to be partakers of the inheritance
13. °of the saints in light; °who delivered us out of the
power of darkness, °and translated us into the king-
14. dom of the Son of his love; °in whom we have our
redemption, the forgiveness of our sins:

[1] Some ancient authorities read *you*.

ways in which they are to walk worthily of the Lord and to please him. He here calls God the Father in order to stimulate thanksgiving by reminding the Colossians of what he *is to them*, as he does in the words immediately following by reminding them of what he *has done for them*, namely, **who made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance**. We may well be thankful to him who is our Father, to him who has fitted us for the inheritance of the saints, as he has fitted the inheritance for us (verse 5). **Of the saints in light**. The phrase in light seems to be in a sense local — the lot of the saints which is in the realm of light.

13. **Who delivered us out of the power of darkness**. This and the following clause define how the Father qualified us for the inheritance of the saints and so add other reasons for thankfulness to him. The preceding mention of light suggests the darkness of their pre-Christian condition. But not only had they been in a state of moral darkness, they were in a sense under the power of darkness (cf. Lk. 22 : 53). This vivid way of conceiving darkness as a power Jesus had used. **And translated us into the kingdom of the Son of his love**. But the Father had done more than deliver them *out of*, he transported them *into*. Or, to speak more exactly, he delivered them *from under* one dominion and brought them under another. For there is here not only the antithesis of darkness and light; there is also the antithesis between one dominion and another — the dominion of darkness, the dominion (kingdom) of him who is the Son of the Father's love. This antithesis is stated with greater clearness by Paul in his address before King Agrippa (Acts 26 : 18). The double antithesis is well brought out by Lightfoot: "We were *slaves* in the realm of *darkness;* God the Father rescued us from this thraldom. He transported us thence and settled us as free citizens in the kingdom of his Son — the realm of light."

14. **In whom we have our redemption**. The clauses of the preceding verse contain a description of the actual experience of the Colossians (and Paul: note the first person plural). In this verse he presents their deliverance as *redemption*, gives the ground of that redemption, and further identifies it as the forgiveness of our sins. Our redemption is grounded in Christ, the Son of the Father's love; and it is actualized in individual experience in the consciousness of forgiveness.

IV. The Nature, Rank, and All-Sufficiency of the Son, through Whom Redemption has come, 1 : 15–20

15. who is °the image of the invisible God, °the firstborn

1. *He is the visible manifestation of the invisible (unknowable) God,* 1 : 15a

15. In the preceding verses (13, 14), Paul has recalled to the Colossian Christians, about whom Epaphras has given him full information, the facts of their own experience: They have been delivered from the power of darkness; they have been deported and have come under the gracious sway of the Son of God's love; they have had actual experience of the redemption which has its ground in him, receiving the forgiveness of their sins. So much, at least, you know about him through the facts of your own experience, Paul would say. But I will tell you more at length who and what he is, so that you may not be misled by the false teachers there, who would fain turn you away from him and persuade you that it is necessary to trust in other mediators. I will show you that he is supreme and all-sufficient, and that, because all the plenitude of deity is in him. **The image of the invisible God.** The word "invisible" is here clearly the antithesis of image, so that the meaning is, who is the visible embodiment, incarnation, manifestation, of the invisible God. The present tense in this sentence does not limit Paul's statement to the exalted Christ, as some hold. The statement is one of general scope: The fact holds good of Christ that he is the image of God. The whole passage views Christ, not "divided" into preincarnate, incarnate, and exalted, but as one Christ in his undivided totality, so to speak. The thought of Paul is contained substantially in John's gospel: "No man has ever at any time seen God. . . . He that hath seen me hath seen the Father." **The firstborn of all creation.** He is the one born *before* all creation. The word *creation* is not the partitive genitive, which would imply that Christ was part of creation himself; it is the genitive of comparison after the word "first" in firstborn. There are two instances of this in Jn. 1 : 15, 30. In later Greek the word "first," which is a superlative, is used with the genitive where the comparative of the same word might have been expected (Thayer). Moreover, notice that, in contrast with *all* other things and beings in heaven and on earth, Christ is born, not created. He is thus in nature different from all else, just as a woman's child, which is born

16. of all creation; °for in him were all things created, °in the heavens and upon the earth, things visible and things invisible, whether thrones or dominions or principalities or powers; °all things have been created

of her, differs from something that is made by her. The word (first-born), then, implies that in some way, inscrutable and incomprehensible, Christ is derived from God, the Father. This is involved in the word "only begotten," also, in Jn. 1 : 18. The word "first-born" is used in Hebrews also (1 : 6). "When he bringeth in the firstborn into the world."

2. *He is the ground, the agent, and the goal of creation, the head and upholder of the universe,* 1 : 16, 17

16. For in him were all things created. Here is the proof of his priority to all creation, namely, that in him creation had its origin, its ground, its realization; which is to say, that apart from him and but for him, there would have been no ground of creation, no motive for creation, no justification of creation, and no creation. The emphasis on the words "in him" is exclusive — it was in him and not in any other that creation had its ground. "The conditioning cause of creation resided in him" (Abbott). And what is this but what we call "The Christian View of the World"? This relation of Christ to creation is acceptable to our reason and reasonable to our understanding. Blot out Christ and creation becomes a failure, a blunder, a crime. "Apart from Christ there would have been no creation, with him creation was a necessity" (Haupt). **In the heavens and upon the earth.** What Paul would say is this: When I said all things I meant all things in the most unqualified, absolute sense, with no limitation or exception. I meant the whole universe, all that is, not only what is on earth but what is in the heavens, not only what is visible but all that is invisible, such, for example, as those beings that compose the hierarchy of the unseen, by whatever name or title they may be designated, thrones, dominions, principalities, powers. There is no doubt that Paul has reference here to those angelic beings or Gnostic eons, as the case may have been, which the propagandists of error believed in and preached among the Christian believers of Colossæ. **All things have been created through him.** Not only was Christ the conditioning cause of creation, the *raison d'être* of creation, it was through his agency that creation actually took place. It was through his agential act or activity that the cosmos emerged out of vacuity. If it is reasonable, as we have seen, that without Christ there would have been no justifying reason of creation and no creation, why should

17. through him, °and unto him; °and he is before
18. all things, °and in him all things [1] consist. °And

[1] That is, *hold together*.

it be thought a thing incredible that he should have accomplished it? It is not any greater to be the agent of creation than to be the conditioning cause of creation, and no harder to believe Christ was the one than the other. **And unto him.** This does not mean that it was for Christ's advantage or glorification or any such thing. It means that creation took place with reference to what Christ was going to be to it and do for it in the course of the ages. It was effected for his future relation to it and his future effects upon it. Of course, it was for the revelation of himself, for he was brought out of the hidden depths and made known both in creation and redemption, of which process incarnation was a part. Thus Christ is the cause, the agent, and the goal of creation. "Tout a été créé à cause de lui, par lui, et pour lui." All men are coming to see, some slowly and confusedly to be sure, that the kingdom of God, as pictured by Christ, is the goal of history, the final end of creation, indeed; and we know that Christ himself is the creator, the life, the centre, the head of this kingdom, which being translated into contemporary thought and interpreted in contemporary terms means, "The Christian View of the World" — the world was made for the kingdom.

17. **And he is before all things.** The word "before" does not here denote priority in time. That would be only a tame repetition of what has already been strongly said in verse 15. This difficulty is probably the explanation of the curious construction of Lightfoot, followed by Westcott and Hort, who take "is" as the predicate with the meaning "he exists," a construction which is indefensible for at least three good reasons. The word "before" is here used of rank. This occurs in classical Greek, though there is no certain instance of it in the New Testament. What Paul here asserts is that he, Christ (with emphasis), is still at the head of the universe, as he was when he created it at the beginning. This is an advance in thought upon anything that has previously been said, and it aptly and admirably prepares the way for the declaration that follows, namely, **and in him all things consist.** Not only is he still the head of the universe, he is the cohesive force that holds it together in its cosmical completeness and order, "maintaining the relations of things and combining them into an ordered whole so that there is cosmos and not chaos." This also is an advance on what Paul has said before and follows with beautiful appositeness the assertion that he is still the head of all things.

he is the head of the body, the church: °who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead; °[1] that in all things °he might have the preëminence.

[1] Or, *that among all he might have*

3. *He is the head of the new spiritual creation, the church*

18. Paul now passes to the relation of Christ to *the new creation*, that is, the church. **And he is the head of the body, the church.** As he was the creator and is the supreme executive of the universe, the natural creation, so he, the same, is the creator and head of the church, which is the new spiritual creation. When the apostle comes to speak of Christ's relation to the church, he uses words different from those employed to show his relation to the world, words that express a more intimate and vital relation — he is *the head* of the church. This does not mean that he is to the church what the mayor is to the city, or the president to the nation — its ruler and director, but what the head is to the body, the seat of its life, the centre and mainspring of all its activities. This is why he uses the strange form of expression here found. Why did he not say simply, he is the head of the church? Because that would have meant no more than that he is ruler and director of the church. He had to say, he is head-to-the-body of the church, or he is body-head to the church, or he is the church's body-head, which means, he is to the church what the head is to the body. This idea is brought out with greater clearness and fulness in chap. 2 : 19, where, speaking of the false teachers, he says, "Not holding fast the Head from whom all the body, being supplied and knit together through the joints and bands, increaseth with the increase of God." **Who is the beginning.** "In that he is." The word here translated "beginning" means much more than that, it means primal source, life-principle, beginning of being. So that Christ is not only the beginning of the church in the sense of priority in time, he is the source of its life, he is its *fons et origo;* being, as he was, the first to rise from the dead, and so having abolished death, he is Lord and giver of life — a life-giving spirit (1 Cor. 15 : 45). **That in all things.** In the church as well as in the universe; in the spiritual as well as in the natural order. **He might have the preëminence.** He is author, upholder, and sovereign of the universe. But more, he is now, since the completion of his work of redemption, in the fact of his resurrection, the head of the church, which is indeed his very body; and this in order that he might thereby complete in *all* realms, spiritual as well as natural, the absoluteness of his primacy and so of his supremacy.

19. °[1] For it was the good pleasure *of the Father* °that in
20. him should all the fulness dwell; °and through him to reconcile all things [2]unto [3]himself, °having made peace

[1] Or, *For the whole fulness of* God *was pleased to dwell in him* [2] Or, *unto him* [3] Or, *him*

4. *He is the embodiment of the totality of the divine attributes and powers,* 1 : 19

19. **For it was the good pleasure of the Father.** Some commentators (as Weiss, Ellicott, Von Soden, Abbott) adopt the construction of the margin: For the whole fulness of God was pleased to dwell in him. This is not only harsh, it does not suit the following words *to reconcile:* all the fulness was pleased to reconcile, etc. It is therefore rejected by most commentators. **That in him should all the fulness dwell.** These words seem to mean that not only a part of what constituted divinity or deity, but the whole of it, and this by the will of the Father. They remind us of the word of Jesus himself in John's gospel, "I and the Father are one." It is possible, as some one has said, that the false teachers held that the Lord had only a part of "the fulness," the pleroma. In opposition to this Paul declares that it was the good pleasure of the Father that the totality of the divine attributes and powers should dwell in Christ. For "all that is his own right is his Father's pleasure and is ever referred to that pleasure by himself" (Alford).

5. *He is the mediator through whom God reconciles all things and beings in heaven and on earth unto himself,* 1 : 20

20. **And through him to reconcile all things unto himself.** This clause is grammatically dependent on the leading verb of verse 19, thus: It was the Father's good pleasure also through Christ to reconcile unto, or bring again all things into harmony with, himself. But it is closely connected with verse 19 in meaning also. For only one in whom all the fulness of the godhead dwelt could do this work of reconciliation. Doubtless Paul here had in mind the interposition of the angelic or Gnostic mediators taught by the false teachers. These mediators were ineffective because neither human nor divine. The true mediator must be both human and divine. It was necessary that in him all the plenitude of the godhead should dwell; and it was necessary also that he should be born into the world and live and suffer as a man. **Having made peace through the blood of his cross.** This rendering obscures the relation and meaning of the participle,

through the blood of his cross; °through him, *I say*, whether things upon the earth, or things in the heavens.

V. The Actual Experience of Reconciliation on the Part of the Colossians: the Meaning and End of it, 1 : 21–23a

21. °And you, °being in time past alienated °and enemies

having made peace. It does not express action antecedent to the act of reconciling. It rather expresses the means and way of reconciling, and the action expressed by it is not only simultaneous, it is identical with the act of reconciling: He reconciled all things to God by making peace or harmonizing them with God through his blood. And this was to be effected through the sacrifice of himself which he made on the cross. Here then is the full conception: The one in whom dwelt all the fulness of deity, shedding his blood on the cross to reconcile the universe back to God. This was the objective fact and factor in the process of reconciliation. **Through him, I say, whether things upon the earth, or things in the heavens.** This striking addition carries a twofold emphasis: it emphasizes by repetition the assertion that it was through Christ and no other, and it emphasizes the universal extent of the reconciliation by the specification of the things in the heavens as well as on the earth. Reconciliation was not brought about by any of those manufactured mediators whom the intruding propagandists preached. Indeed, those whom they accepted for themselves and urged upon others as mediators needed themselves to be reconciled; and as a matter of fact, Paul says, Christ was reconciler for them as well as for men. If these mediators were the "angels" of Jewish theology, then they too needed reconciliation. This may be the intent of the passage. But if not, then who or what were the "things in the heavens" that Christ is said to have reconciled? Beyond some vague hints such as those in Acts 3 : 21; Rom. 8 : 21; and Eph. 1 : 10, we know nothing, and perhaps, as Lightfoot says, "It were vain to speculate." But see on Eph. 1 : 10.

21. **And you.** In verses 12–14 he referred to the experience of Christians in general, including the Colossians and himself; now he refers specifically to the experience of the Colossians as no doubt Epaphras had described it to him. You are, Paul would say, you yourselves are an example of Christ's reconciling work. **Being in time past alienated.** When you were formerly in a state of estrangement and alienation. **And enemies in your mind.** They were more than alienated, they were actively hostile to God in the attitude

in your mind °in your evil works, °yet now [1] hath he
22. reconciled °in the body of his flesh °through death, °to present you holy and without blemish and unreprove-
23. able °before him: °if so be that ye continue in the faith, °grounded and stedfast, °and not moved away °from the hope of the gospel °which ye heard, which was preached in all creation under heaven;

[1] Some ancient authorities read *ye have been reconciled.*

toward him of their mind and thought. A good commentary on this may be found in Rom. 8 : 7, "The mind of the flesh is enmity to God." **In your evil works.** In the practice of, or while ye went on practising, evil deeds.

22. **Yet now hath he reconciled.** He has, as you know by experience, actually brought you into a state of harmony and peace with himself. **In the body of his flesh.** His literal physical body, thus described to prevent confusion with what he had said in verse 18 about the church as the body of Christ. It is possible that Paul had in mind the false teachers also who thought reconciliation could be effected by spiritual beings only, and who made of little or no account the literal death of the body of Christ. **Through death.** This defines the words "in the body of his flesh" and shows how he effected reconciliation in the body of his flesh — it was through the death of that body. **To present you holy and without blemish and unreproveable.** This is the purpose of his reconciling you. These terms are not to be taken in a forensic sense, but express moral and spiritual character, the first being positive, the other two negative. **Before him.** These words are to be taken with "present," to present you before him.

23. **If so be that ye continue in the faith.** By the exercise of faith in the gospel, as it was preached to them by Epaphras, they had actually been brought into harmony and peace with God. The condition of their being presented at last before God holy and without blemish and without blame was that they continue in the (same) faith instead of following the false teachers away from Christ. The gospel does not need to be changed or supplemented. **Grounded and stedfast.** These words, one a participle and the other an adjective, may be taken as complementary to the verb "continue," thus: If ye continue grounded and stedfast in the faith; or they may be taken as a sort of appositional addition, as the Revised Version. **And not moved away.** This is a present participle and denotes progress or process — not moving or shifting away to the empty vagaries of the

VI. This Leads up to a Fuller Statement of Paul's Relation to the Gospel and his Agency in Disseminating it, 1 : 23b–29

°whereof I Paul was made a minister.

24. °Now I rejoice in my sufferings for your sake, °and fill up on my part that which is lacking of the afflic-

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heretics. **From the hope of the gospel.** The hope which the gospel gives. **Which ye heard, which was preached in all creation under heaven.** This is the gospel which you heard; and the gospel which you heard is that which has been universally preached; and it is the gospel of which I Paul was appointed a minister. It is not likely that you will be wrong in cleaving to this gospel, having, as it does, such credentials as these. It is not likely that it is a false gospel or that it is defective. It is not likely that that scheme which the Jewish angel worshippers and Gnostic propagandists have hatched up and patched up, there in that little corner of the world, is the true gospel and that I, Paul, and all the rest of the church universal are wrong. **Whereof I Paul was made a minister.** I, Paul, was commissioned as a minister of this gospel by God who is its author. I received it not from *man*, nor through man, but from God.

24. **Now I rejoice in my sufferings for your sake.** This sentence breaks in very abruptly. The abruptness of it has puzzled all readers of the epistle from the copyists of the manuscripts down to the latest commentator. It indicates excited emotion on the part of Paul. It was nothing new for him to rejoice in his sufferings and to say so, as he did in 2 Cor. 12 : 9, 10; Phil. 2 : 17. But there *is* something new here, something he has nowhere else said; most probably it had never occurred to him before. And the thought is so startling that it affects his language and disturbs the even tenor of his style. It is this: that in the sufferings which, as a prisoner, he was then undergoing for the sake of the Colossians and other Gentiles, he was actually supplementing and completing the afflictions of Christ! **And fill up on my part that which is lacking.** In what sense was there any lack in the sufferings of Christ? Certainly Paul would have been the last to say that they were defective in any sacrificial sense. It was in this sense : that many and severe afflictions (the word used by Paul) were necessary, inevitable, in bringing Christ to the knowledge and commending him to the acceptance of the Gentiles, as was illustrated in the career of Paul and all through the history of Acts. These necessary afflictions had to be endured by somebody. Christ himself

tions of Christ °in my flesh for his body's sake, °which
25. is the church; °whereof I was made a minister, °according to the [1] dispensation of God which was given
26. me to you-ward, to fulfil the word of God, °*even* the mystery which hath been hid [2] from all ages and gener-

[1] Or, *stewardship* [2] Gr. *from the ages and from the generations.*

could not endure them in his own person, for he was no longer in the world. Those who voluntarily accepted and endured these afflictions were, then, in a very real sense, doing it in Christ's stead. Jesus said to Saul on the Damascus road, "Why persecutest thou *me?*" Others explain the words of Paul on the ground of his doctrine of the mystical identification of believers with Christ. **In my flesh for his body's sake.** A very striking collocation — *in* my flesh *for* his body. It is equivalent to in *my* body for *his* body. The afflictions are endured in my body, but it is for his body. Paul probably uses the word "flesh" for the sake of vividness, realism. **Which is the church.** Added to prevent confusion between Christ's mystical body and his literal physical body.

25. **Whereof I was made a minister.** In verse 23 he said he had been made a minister of the gospel; here of the church. He served the church in ministering the gospel; and he served the cause of the gospel in ministering to the church. **According to the dispensation of God.** He here amplifies the implication of verse 1 into a full and formal statement of his commission as an apostle: his stewardship, trusteeship, of the gospel was by direct gift, bestowment, appointment, of God himself. Surely, then, he ought to know what the gospel was and what it was not.

26. **Even the mystery which hath been hid.** The word "mystery" simply means something which is not known until it is revealed, which cannot be known except by revelation, in short, a secret. To Paul it was given to make this secret known, namely, that the whole world of Gentiles is made fellow-sharer of salvation in Christ, as Paul says at length in Eph. 3 : 4, 8, 9. The undisputed fact that it was he who gave the gospel to the world of Gentiles is a confirmation of his statement that it was he to whom the revelation of this secret and the commission to make it known were intrusted. "Paul always catches fire whenever he is brought to think or speak of the world-wide destination of the gospel and the honor bestowed on him in intrusting him with the task of transforming the church from a Jewish sect to a world-wide communion. There is no greater revolution in the history of the world than that accomplished through him —

ations: °but now hath it been manifested to his saints,
27. °to whom God was pleased °to make known °what is the
riches of the glory of °this mystery among the Gen-
28. tiles, °which is Christ in you, °the hope of glory: °whom
we proclaim, °admonishing °every man and teaching

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cutting Christianity loose from Judaism and widening the church to include the race" (Maclaren). **But now hath it been manifested to his saints.** It has now become "an open secret," for it has been made known to God's people and so to all the world. The chief agent to whom and through whom it was made known, especially in its full scope and significance, was Paul. Compare Eph. 3 : 8, 9.

27. **To whom God was pleased** = inasmuch as it was to them that God willed. **To make known.** In their experience of salvation. **What is the riches of the glory.** Not how glorious is the riches, but how rich is the glory, for glory is the principal idea here. The conception of the inclusion of all the Gentile peoples of the whole world in the hitherto undisclosed plan of God is so inspiring to Paul that he has to strain language to its utmost to express his sense of it. A good commentary on this part of Colossians is to be found in Eph. 3 : 2–10, which is evidently an amplification of this. **This mystery among the Gentiles.** It is this now open secret of the gospel offered freely to and experienced by the Gentiles that has so taken possession of Paul that he lingers on it and is loath to let it go.

28. **Which** (secret) **is Christ in you.** This does not mean Christ among you. That does not agree with what follows, which is a subjective, inner experience, namely, **the hope of glory.** "The indwelling Christ is a pledge of future glory." "If we have the experience of his dwelling in our hearts, we have in that very experience of his peace and power a quickener of the hope that it will continue after death and forever. One who habitually has Christ dwelling in him cannot believe that death will end such a union." What is the glory of which the indwelling of Christ creates the hope? See Col. 3 : 4; Rom. 5 : 2; 8 : 17. **Whom we proclaim.** Paul here refers to the false teachers and their doctrines. The pronoun "we" is emphatic. In contrast with what they teach, *we*, Paul and those of his mind, *we* proclaim Christ. **Admonishing . . . and teaching.** We need not suppose that this refers to warning the disciples against false teaching, as Paul is doing in this epistle. It was his regular habit to warn men, to awaken them, and to teach men. This is the natural order. We do not need to distinguish the words further. **Every man.** Paul's gospel was not for any special class. He slighted *no* man, he passed by *no* man. He preached a gospel that was for every single indi-

every man °in all wisdom, °that we may present every
29. man perfect °in Christ; °whereunto I labour also,
°striving °according to his working, which worketh in
me [1] mightily.

VII. The Emptiness and Futility of the False Teaching in Contrast with the All-Sufficiency of Christ, 2 : 1–23

2. °For I would have you know how greatly I strive for

[1] Or, *in power*

vidual man, the possibility of whose salvation he recognized and undertook to secure. And we know this was his actual practice. He not only believed in "individual work for individuals," he undertook it. Read Acts 20 : 31, and especially the beautiful and pathetic letter to Philemon about an individual, a runaway slave. Paul knew no hopeless classes and no hopeless cases. **In all wisdom.** That is, by using every form of wisdom and tact, adapting it to "every man," to each individual case. **That we may present every man perfect.** Present to whom? God, of course. Paul then preaches and *labors* (see next verse) with the hope and purpose of bringing *every man* to maturity in faith and character. **In Christ.** For Paul knows no other way; and he has absolutely no hope of doing it apart from Christ.

29. **Whereunto I labour also.** Better, *whereunto I actually toil.* With a view to which end, namely, that I may, by seasonable warning and patient teaching, in the use of every form of wisdom, develop every man to the state of maturity in faith and Christian life, I actually toil. The word expresses toil carried to the point of weariness. **Striving.** Straining like an athlete in the contest. **According to his working, which worketh in me mightily.** The toil and striving are not of a merely human sort, not in proportion to his own natural powers, but to the energy of him who energizes in him in mighty power. Compare Eph. 3 : 20: "According to the power that worketh in us."

1. *His intense anxiety for them in view of the danger threatening them,* 2 : 1–8

1. **For I would have you know how greatly I strive for you.** Better, *in how severe a struggle I am engaged in your behalf.* This is by way of confirming what he had said in the previous verse (1 : 29). It

you, °and for them at Laodicea, °and for as many as
2. have not seen my face in the flesh; °that their hearts
may be comforted, °they being knit together in love,
°and unto all riches of the [1] full assurance of under-
standing, °that they may know the mystery of God,
3. [2] *even* Christ, °in whom °are all the treasures of wisdom

[1] Or, *fulness* [2] The ancient authorities vary much in the text of this passage.

may be also a justification of his having used such strong words. This class of words is to be found in every group of Paul's epistles, but are nowhere else in the New Testament. **And for them at Laodicea.** Laodicea was near to Colossæ (eleven miles), and its church had the same pastor (4 : 13). **And for as many as have not seen my face in the flesh** = and in short for all who, etc. These words imply what is confirmed by the tone of the epistle throughout, as well as by the absence of any mention of Colossæ in Acts, that Paul had never visited Colossæ.

2. **That their hearts may be comforted,** or rather that their hearts may be encouraged and strengthened. They needed encouragement more than they needed comfort. **They being knit together in love.** That is, that they may be bound together in love. This would guard them against the divisive tendencies of the false teaching. **And unto all riches of the full assurance of understanding.** It is the further object of his agonizing struggle in prayer that their hearts may be comforted and united so as to bring them into the enjoyment of all that wealth which consists in the full assurance, the absolutely unquestioning, unwavering certitude, which either meets and answers all the questions of the understanding or so satisfies and fills the heart that there are no questions to ask. The thought is similar to that in Phil. 4 : 7: "The peace of God which passeth all understanding." **That they may know the mystery of God, even Christ.** This is parallel to the preceding words, namely, *Unto all the riches of the full assurance of understanding*, which is the same as to say, that they may fully know Christ, God's secret; for full knowledge of him will give full assurance and satisfaction to the understanding.

3. **In whom.** This refers to Christ, who is the secret of God. **Are all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.** The false teachers assumed that they had a knowledge higher and deeper than that of ordinary Christian believers; otherwise they would not have proposed to teach them. As a sweeping refutation of all these assumptions and pretensions Paul declares at once that all wisdom and knowledge are to be found in Christ, and they do not need therefore

1 Cor. 1:3

4. and knowledge °hidden. °This I say, °that no one
5. may delude you with persuasiveness of speech. For
though I am absent in the flesh, yet am I with you in
the spirit, °joying and beholding °your order, and the
6. stedfastness of your faith in Christ.

°As therefore ye received Christ Jesus the Lord,
7. °*so* walk in him, °rooted °and builded up in him,

to seek it elsewhere. **Hidden.** This has a double reference: to the secret, esoteric knowledge professed by the false teachers, on the one hand; and to Christ as *the secret* of God, on the other. For the knowledge that is in Christ is hidden, so to speak, and has to be revealed before it can be made available. 1 Cor. 2 : 6–10 is an illuminating commentary on this.

4. **This I say.** Referring to the preceding assertion that all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge are in Christ. **That no one may delude you with persuasiveness of speech.** That no one may mislead you by his plausible sophistry. This is the first explicit reference to the false teachers, and this description of them reveals at once their sinister motives and their subtle methods. **Delude.** Seduce you away from your attitude of steadfast faith and your solid unanimity in Christ, which, though absent, I behold, and beholding, rejoice.

5. **Joying and beholding.** Rejoicing with you and beholding. **Your order, and the stedfastness of your faith in Christ.** He had learned from Epaphras that, so far, none of the Colossian Christians had been led away. These are military figures, and the meaning seems to be, "Your orderly array and the solid unbroken front which your faith in Christ presents against the assaults of the deceivers." We should bear in mind that Paul was in daily contact with drilling soldiers in the barracks at Rome, Eph. 6 : 10–17.

6. **Therefore.** What I am driving at is this, Do not turn away from Christ to follow the new but dangerous scheme of the deceivers. **As ye received Christ Jesus the Lord.** They had learned the gospel from Epaphras (1 : 7), whose conception of the gospel was the same as Paul's. **Christ.** He says Christ instead of the gospel because the fundamental error of the false teachers was their misconception of Christ. **Jesus.** "In whom the true conception of the Christ was realized." Cf. Eph. 3 : 11; 4 : 20, 21. **So walk in him.** Live your life, regulate your whole conduct, in accordance with the way you learned Christ, and in union with him.

7. **Rooted.** This, being the perfect tense, expresses the settled state of their life with reference to Christ. **And builded up in him.** This, being the present tense, expresses the continual development which is

and stablished [1] in your faith, even as ye were taught,
8. abounding [2] in thanksgiving.
[3] Take heed lest there shall be any one that
maketh spoil of you through his philosophy and
vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the
9. [4] rudiments of the world, and not after Christ: for

[1] Or, *by* [2] Some ancient authorities insert *in it.* [3] Or, *see whether* [4] Or, *elements*

always advancing, but still and always, *in him.* **And stablished in your faith.** This also is a present participle, denoting, not a fixed, unchanging state, but a continuous process. They were to become continuously more and more firmly established *in*, not *by*, their faith, as the margin reads.

8. **Take heed lest there shall be any one.** Here again is a direct reference to the men who were trying to deceive them by subtle, artful sophistry into adopting their system in place of the gospel they had received at first. **That maketh spoil of you.** Take possession of you and carry you off as his spoil. This, then, is what they were engaged in trying to do. **Through his philosophy and vain deceit.** Here Paul directly attacks the false teaching. "Philosophy" is what they called their system. An empty delusion and sham is what Paul called it, and what it was. It was false and it was empty. There was absolutely nothing to it. In these heated words we see again the jealous and fiery defender of the faith who wrote the epistle to the Galatians. **After the tradition of men.** This so-called "philosophy" of theirs was a man-made scheme. God had nothing to do with it; it had in reality nothing to do with God. It was originated entirely by men and is handed along from men to men. The stream rises no higher than its source. **After the rudiments of the world.** As to its origin, it is altogether of man; as to its subject-matter, it concerns itself with what is of this world. As to what is meant specifically by the expression "the rudiments of the world," it is not easy to determine. It may mean worldly in the sense of material as opposed to spiritual things. Or it may mean elements with which the world concerns itself, namely, puerile questions of the world. Several recent commentators take it to mean personal elemental spirits (see Introduction). **And not after Christ.** Not having Christ for its subject-matter.

2. The fulness of Christ and their fulness in him, 2 : 9–15

9. **For in him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead.** The word "for" introduces the reason or ground of a thought which is left to be

in him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead °bodily,
10 °and in him ye are made full, °who is the head of all
11. principality and power: °in whom ye were also circumcised with a circumcision not made with hands,

supplied by the reader, as is often the case in Paul. The connection is something like this: The system or gospel that has not Christ for its subject-matter and centre is false, which implies that the true gospel *has* Christ for its subject-matter; and conversely, the gospel which has Christ for its centre and substance is true—*for in him dwells all the fulness of the Godhead. In him,* standing at the beginning of the sentence, is emphatic. **Dwelleth.** Some say that this present tense implies that the reference is to the present exalted state of Christ. Not necessarily so. It may be a general statement of what is true of Christ throughout. In any case it was sufficient to make plain the truth that Paul wanted to utter, and to serve his purpose. **All the fulness.** That is, not a part of what constituted deity, but the amplitude of it. **Of the Godhead.** Not only divine powers or attributes, but the divine nature itself. This word means *deity*, not *divinity;* that is another Greek word. **Bodily.** Some refer this to the incarnation and take it to mean corporeally, "bodily-wise" (Lightfoot). Others take it to mean: The fulness dwells in the exalted Christ as a complete and organic whole. In this case it refers to the fulness and not to Christ.

10. **And in him ye are made full.** You are the body of Christ, incorporate with him, so that in him the fulness is yours, ideally; and practically, you find in Christ the full satisfaction of every spiritual want and do not need the help of any other mediator or power. Being in him, you are filled from his fulness as a smaller vessel within a larger one is filled from the fulness of the larger one. It is filled to its own full capacity, yet not so as to receive all the fulness. **Who is the head of all principality and power.** Better, *of every principality.* He who is your head is universal head of all that is called, of all that is, rule and authority in the universe. He is the head of all those intermediate beings the false teachers are trying to persuade you to put your trust in. As they themselves are inferior to and dependent on Christ, they have nothing that you have not already at first hand and in all its fulness in Christ.

11. **In whom ye were also circumcised.** What does he mean by dragging in circumcision here? Where is the relevancy of any such reference? Paul has just made a sweeping assertion of the absolute fulness of Christ, the divine fulness of Christ, in general, and followed it by an unqualified declaration that his fulness is theirs, that they have the full satisfaction of every spiritual need in him. But this is a

°in the putting off of the body of the flesh, °in the cir-
12. cumcision of Christ; °having been buried with him in

general undefined statement. He now wishes to give some concrete instance of this general truth and that in terms of their own actual experience, one which they have the means of verifying. So he cites and describes their experience of actual deliverance from the dominion and corruption of their carnal nature. But for some reason he chooses to do this under the figure of circumcision. Why? Doubtless because the false teachers, among other things, insisted on their being circumcised, not perhaps as a condition of salvation, as in the case of the Gentile believers at Antioch (Acts 15 : 1) and the Galatians (Gal. 6 : 12), but probably as conferring and indicating a higher degree of sanctity. So, Paul says, by virtue of your union with Christ, you have already been circumcised in the true sense of that symbolic observance. For true circumcision was not done with hands. What could that do toward the renewing of a man's evil nature and transforming him in character? **In the putting off of the body of the flesh.** Circumcision had a symbolic meaning for Paul. It meant the complete putting off, not of a part of the body, but of the entire body of the flesh, that is, rendering inactive, unresponsive, and dead the body in so far as it is the seat or organ of sinful passion; as he says in Rom. 6 : 6, "That *the body of sin* might be done away." This then, is what, as a matter of experience, Christ had done for the Colossians, as Epaphras had informed Paul; he had done for them the wonderful, the impossible thing that he had years ago done for Paul himself as related in Rom. 7 : 24, 25, and 8 : 2. Now, then, why should they turn aside to the weak and beggarly elements of the world and consent to be brought into dependence on them and bondage to them? The situation in Galatians is similar to this (see Gal. 3 : 3 and 4 : 9). **In the circumcision of Christ.** The circumcision which is brought about by Christ by virtue of union with him, as opposed to the hand-made circumcision of the Jewish patriarchs and Moses.

12. **Having been buried with him in baptism.** The sudden mention of circumcision in the preceding verse was so abrupt as to be almost startling. The introduction of baptism here seems more so. What connection has baptism with the subject he is discussing? It is probably introduced to mark the epoch in their own life when they had the experience of deliverance called in the preceding verse *circumcision*. It specifies the time when the circumcision was brought about. But it has a further and deeper meaning here. It introduces the other, the positive, element of their experience of salvation, namely, their resurrection to a new life. Circumcision represented the deliverance from the bondage and corruption of the old carnal

baptism, °wherein °ye were also raised with him °through faith in the working of God, °who raised him
13. from the dead. °And you, °being dead °through your trespasses °and the uncircumcision of your flesh, °you, *I say*, °did he quicken together with him, °having for-

life; baptism represented the introduction into the new resurrection life of holiness and service. **Wherein.** That is, at the time of baptism, though some refer this to Christ, meaning *in whom*. **Ye were also raised with him.** This view of the symbolic significance of baptism is a prominent Pauline conception and is drawn out at length in Rom. 6 : 3, 4, which is a good commentary on this. **Through faith in the working of God.** The literal translation of the Greek would be *through the faith of the working of God*, which may mean either the faith which is the effect of the working of God, or faith directed toward, exercised in, the working of God, as the R.V. renders it. This last seems to be more in agreement with the usage of Paul. **Who raised him from the dead.** The resurrection of Jesus was with Paul the great example of the efficacy of the working of God, as in Eph. 1 : 19, 20.

13. **And you.** That is, you as well as Christ. **Being dead.** That is, though you were dead, or while you were dead. In the former appeal to their experience, 1 : 21, he referred to their prechristian condition as one of estrangement from and hostility to God. Here he goes further, he says they were dead to all good. **Through your trespasses.** In 1 : 21 it was *in* their evil deeds, in the practice of wrong-doing; here it is *through*, by means or by reason of their trespasses. See a similar thought in Jn. 3 : 19 and Rom. 7 : 9. **And the uncircumcision of your flesh.** The unrenewed state of your carnal nature, which prompted the transgressions. **You, I say.** Repeated to emphasize the personal appeal to them on the ground of their experience. **Did he quicken together with him.** God is the subject of the verb "quicken" (cf. verse 12). Paul does not here mean to say that when God raised Christ from the dead, he potentially raised them, *i.e.*, made provision for their being raised into spiritual life, though that is true; but that he actually raised them into spiritual life (at their conversion) even as he raised Christ. There is a passage in Romans (6 : 4, 5) which is parallel to this and a good commentary on it. The passage here refers to their spiritual resurrection, the regeneration of their moral being, as is shown by what follows, namely, **having forgiven us all our trespasses.** This still refers to God as subject. It means forgiving us our trespasses in the act of quickening. Note the change from the second to the first person — from "you" to "us."

14. given us all our trespasses; °having blotted out [1]the bond written in ordinances °that was against us, °which was contrary to us: °and he hath taken it out of the

[1] Or, *the bond that was against us by its ordinances*

14. **Having blotted out the bond written in ordinances.** The statement of the preceding verse is made of God. It was he who quickened them into new life, having forgiven them all their trespasses. But the declarations of verses 14 and 15 are made of Christ, as is shown by the parallel passage in Eph. 2 : 15. *The bond* was the law which the Jews were under obligation to keep, so that it was of the nature of a contract or bond. The law consisted, in part at least, of rules and regulations concerning the minutest details of life. This is probably what Paul means by "ordinances." **That was against us** = which stood against us. This refers to "the validity of the bond itself." **Which was contrary to us.** This describes its actual oppression of us. It was of binding force against us and it was oppressive in its operation on us. **And he hath taken it out of the way, nailing it to the cross.** Christ not only removed the condemnation of the law (Rom. 8 : 1), he actually blotted it out, cancelled it; nay, he absolutely destroyed the document itself — he pinned it with nails to the cross and left it to rot and perish. These are words of intolerant resentment and unqualified condemnation. What do they mean? Could Paul, who wrote of the moral law in terms of such profound reverence as he does in Rom. 7 : 12–22, have used these words of unqualified condemnation and unrelieved severity of that same law? In order to meet this difficulty must we not suppose that, though Paul nowhere expressly makes a distinction between the ceremonial and the moral precepts of the law, yet he does, in this passage, have the difference *in mind* and he does here refer to the former? It seems very likely that when he speaks of the bond written in ordinances, or consisting of ordinances, he has in mind that part of the law which prescribes rules and regulations concerning external matters. (1) The word "ordinances" itself suggests this (cf. verse 21). (2) Paul nowhere else speaks with such feeling or in such terms of the moral law, but always with respect and reverence (cf. Rom. 7 : 12, 22). (3) Those prescriptions of the false teachers which in verses 16 and 21 he enjoins the Colossians to ignore and repudiate have reference solely to external observances. (4) In Phil. 3 : 6, Paul declares that "touching the righteousness which is in the law" he was in his pre-christian state "found blameless." If this refers to what is known as the ceremonial law, then this passage is reconcilable with what he says in Rom. 7 : 14, 22, 23, about his helpless inability to keep the

15. way, nailing it to the cross; °[1] having put off from
himself the principalities and the powers, he made a
show of them openly, triumphing over them in it.
16. °Let no man therefore judge you in meat, or in drink,
or in respect of a feast day or a new moon or a sabbath
17. day: °which are a shadow of the things to come; °but
18. the body is Christ's. °Let no man rob you of your

[1] Or, *having put off from himself his* body, *he made a show of the principalities and powers &c.*

law (the moral law). Otherwise the two passages are flatly contradictory and absolutely irreconcilable.

15. **Having put off**, etc. This verse is one of the most obscure and difficult in the epistle, or indeed in the whole New Testament. It is probable that the text here has been corrupted, increasing the difficulty. Lightfoot's paraphrase is as follows: "Having stripped off and put away the powers of evil, he made a public display of them, leading them as captives or trophies in a triumphal procession by means of the cross. The convict's gibbet becomes the victor's car." But see Abbott, pp. 258–261, and Peake, p. 569.

16. **Let no man therefore.** Since the bond is cancelled and destroyed and the law of precepts and prohibitions is thus abolished, do not let any man bring you into bondage to it again. It seems clear that here Paul has in mind those "ordinances" of the law which gave minute directions concerning external unessential matters, such as meats, drinks, feast days, etc. Moreover, he had the example and authority of Christ himself for repudiating the ceremonial part of the law. On this point Christ was not less explicit and not less insistent than Paul, as one may see in Mk. 7 : 6–19, especially verses 14, 18, 19. This is then a new emancipation proclamation of the great Apostle, declaring once more the absolute freedom of Christian believers, as to all external matters, which, under somewhat similar circumstances, he had declared in his ringing message to the Galatians. And the same great principle is involved in Paul's treatment of the question of eating meat that had been offered to idols (in Rom. 14 : 14, 20, and 1 Cor. 8 : 4, 8).

17. **Which are a shadow of the things to come.** We use the same figure when we say, "Coming events cast their shadows before." The "ordinances" of the old dispensation foreshadowed that which was the coming reality. **But the body is Christ's.** The realities typified by those observances are to be found in Christ. Why should we go back to the shadow when we have the substance?

prize [o1] by a voluntary humility [o]and worshipping of the
angels, [o2] dwelling in the things which he hath [3] seen,
19. [o]vainly puffed up by his fleshly mind, [o]and not

[1] Or, *of his own mere will, by humility &c.* [2] Or, *taking his stand upon* [3] Many authorities, some ancient, insert *not.*

18. **Let no man rob you of your prize.** Let no man assuming to act as umpire decide against you as holding wrong views, and so deprive you of the prize, the prize of salvation and the hope of eternal life (1 : 5). **By a voluntary humility.** That is, by practising a sort of mortification imposed upon himself by his own will and choice. **And worshipping of the angels.** In which their self-imposed and false humility displays itself. It seems from the connection here that the false teachers made much of this self-assumed humility from an idea that men were unfit to approach God himself and must therefore avail themselves of the mediation of angels. The explicit mention of angel worship gives color to the contention of those who hold that it was a Jewish cult and not Gnosticism that Paul was opposing. But see Introduction. **Dwelling in the things which he hath seen.** Some ancient witnesses insert the word "not" before "seen"; but the best manuscripts and the editors omit it. Without it the meaning seems to be that they, the false teachers, busy themselves with what they claim to have seen, with their visions. The text, as well as the meaning of some of the principal words in verse 18, is very uncertain, which makes it one of the most difficult verses in the epistle. **Puffed up by his fleshly mind.** This is a fine touch. These teachers, Paul says, instead of being really humble, as they professed, were really puffed up, and were proud of their professed humility. **By his fleshly mind.** Literally, by the mind of the flesh. This is one of those characteristic expressions of Paul which glance deep into human nature and condense a whole anthropology in a single phrase. In verse 11 of this chapter he spoke of *the body of the flesh;* here, of *the mind of the flesh.* The fleshly nature dominates the body and it dominates the mind also; so that a man's thinking and thoughts are tinctured, saturated, dominated, by the passions of the fleshly nature. **Vainly.** In 2 : 8 Paul called the so-called "philosophy" of these interlopers "an empty sham"; nevertheless, they were greatly puffed up over it. But they were puffed up without reason. There was nothing in it.

19. **And not holding fast the Head.** Not maintaining their connection with the head, evidently because they had substituted others for him who is the head. They were thus separated from the head; and being severed from the head, that is, having no longer their thought fixed on Christ as the only source of life, and having ceased

holding fast the Head, °from whom °all the body,
°being supplied and knit together through the joints
and bands, °increaseth with the increase of God.

20. °If ye died with Christ °from the [1] rudiments of the

[1] Or, *elements*

to trust him as head, and having no longer any feeling of dependence on him as head, they were as lifeless as a headless body would be. **From whom.** Note, it is from *whom* and not from *which*, because Paul is thinking of Christ. **All the body.** As every part of the whole body depends for life and efficiency on its being in connection with the head, and if severed from the head would be dead, just so absolutely does every member of the spiritual body depend on Christ. Christ himself so taught, but under a different figure, that of the vine and the branches, Jn. 15 : 1–11. **Being supplied and knit together through the joints and bands.** Both these participles are present and the meaning is, being *continuously* supplied and knit together. The word here translated *joints* means touch or contact. The verb is used in verse 21, *touch not.* Every part of the body, then, is supplied (with vitality, sensibility, and the power of activity) through the system of contacts which keep it in *touch* with the head (the brain). As some one has suggested, Paul may have gained this bit of information concerning the central and vital function of the brain from Doctor Luke, who was with him (4 : 14). **And bands.** The various parts of the body are united into an organic whole through the muscles, nerves, tendons, "any of the connecting bands which strap the body together." Thus Christ is the source of all nourishment and the bond of all unity. **Increaseth with the increase of God.** When the various parts of the church-body are in vital relation with Christ as head, then, the condition of growth being fulfilled, God effects the growth; for "it is God that giveth the increase."

20. **If ye died with Christ.** This is Paul's way of presenting the negative side of the process of spiritual renewal. It is drawn out more fully in Rom. 6 : 2–5. If ye died *with* Christ, ye died *from* the world: ye severed your connection and ceased your relations with it as having anything to do with your salvation. **From the rudiments of the world.** It seems strained, not to say far-fetched and fanciful, to consider these the elemental spirits or "angels," as some recent commentators hold. By the elements of the world Paul probably means the elementary, or *a-b-c* methods, the kindergarten methods, of making people righteous, as, for example, by means of the law. People could not be made righteous by legislation, especially by legislation concerning external observances, any more then than now.

world, °why, as though living in the world, °do ye
21. subject yourselves to ordinances, °Handle not, nor
22. taste, nor touch (°all which things are to perish with the using), °after the precepts and doctrines of men?
23. °Which things °have indeed a show of wisdom °in will-worship, °and humility, °and severity to the body;

Why, as though living in the world. This is similar in spirit and form to Paul's earnest question in Rom. 6 : 2, "We who died to sin, how shall we any longer live therein?" So here: If, when ye became Christians, ye were as really separated from the world's notions and ways of seeking salvation as if ye had died, then why, as if you were still living according to these notions and ways, **do ye subject yourselves to ordinances?** The word is radically the same as that in verse 14. The ordinances have been abolished, and ye became dead to them. How foolish to rake up those old, defunct ordinances and seek to be in bondage to them again! Similarly in Gal. 3: 1–3.

21. **Handle not, nor taste, nor touch.** Note the gradation here — do not handle; no, do not taste; do not even touch. These are specimens of the ascetic prohibitions of the false teachers.

22. **All which things are to perish with the using.** The things forbidden in their prohibitions are used, and that is the end of them. What folly to suppose that they affect character or have anything to do with salvation? This is in perfect agreement with what Jesus himself said on the same subject in Mk. 7 : 14–19. **After the precepts and doctrines of men.** These words are to be taken with Why do you subject yourselves to ordinances? What comes between is a parenthesis proper. *Precepts* refer to commandments; *doctrines*, to systematic teaching.

23. **Which things.** That is, such precepts and teachings. **Have indeed a show of wisdom.** Rather, they are in repute as wisdom, they pass for wisdom. They seem to be very reasonable and wise precepts, etc. **In will-worship** = worship which men offer of their "mere will" (cf. 2 : 18). They just take it into their head to offer as worship or service something which they take a notion to; and naturally it is likely to be something that will appeal to some selfish principle or gratify some selfish desire. It is likely to be also something not prescribed or required by God and contrary to the nature and contents of faith in Christ. So it was with the self-devised and self-imposed observances and asceticisms of the false teachers at Colossæ. **And humility.** The word "will" is probably to be taken with this word also. It was not a genuine humility, but a self-devised and self-imposed humility and of a sort not required or recognized by God or in harmony with faith in Christ. **And severity to the body.**

°*but are* not of any [1] value against the indulgence of the flesh.

VIII. What is Involved in the Experience of having died with Christ to the World (2 : 20) and having been raised with him into Newness of Life (3 : 1) 3 : 1–17

3. °If then ye were raised together with Christ, °seek the things that are above, °where Christ is, °seated on

[1] Or, *honour*

The word literally means *unsparingness*. It is used of an extreme asceticism, which did not spare the body, which unsparingly afflicted the body, either to acquire merit or to conquer passion. **But are not of any value against the indulgence of the flesh.** These words are very difficult, among the most difficult in the epistle, on a par, in this respect, with verse 15 of this same chapter. It is believed by some very able scholars (Hort, Haupt, and others) that the text is corrupt. This is true of yet other parts of this chapter. Another view of the meaning of the words, as they stand, seems more in keeping with the preceding context; it is this: "but are not of any value, because they serve only for the satisfaction of the flesh."

1. *Heavenly-mindedness*, 3 : 1–4

1. If then ye were raised together with Christ. In 2 : 20 ff. Paul sets forth what should follow if they had died with Christ; here, what, if they had been raised up with Christ. If you did realize in your experience what is the meaning of dying with Christ, then you *died from* the things that belong to the world's ways of thinking and doing, and you have no more to do with them; let them alone. This is the negative side. If you realized in your experience the meaning of being raised up with Christ, it was a resurrection to another life and another world, namely, the heavenly. This is the positive side. **Seek the things that are above.** The things that are above are perhaps the same that Paul means by "the spiritual blessings in the heavenly places" in Eph. 1 : 3; 2 : 6. It includes all the blessings that belong to the higher, the spiritual life. **Where Christ is.** "It is proper that the thoughts and desires of the members should be turned to where the Head already is." **Seated on the right hand of God.** A

2. the right hand of God. °Set your mind on the things
that are above, °not on the things that are upon the
3. earth. °For ye died, °and your life is hid with Christ
4. in God. When Christ, °*who is* [1] our life, shall be
manifested, then shall ye also with him be manifested
5. in glory.
°[2] Mortify therefore °your members which are

[1] Many ancient authorities read *your* [2] Gr. *Make dead.*

figurative description, frequently found in the New Testament, of Christ's present exalted state and rank: subordinate to the Father, but sovereign over all else.

2. **Set your mind on the things.** Same word is used in Rom. 8 : 5. "Not only seek heaven, think heaven." Let your mind and heart be filled and permeated with the things that belong to heaven. The modern word for it is *heavenly-mindedness* — which in these days is often disparaged, sometimes ridiculed; but, all the same, it is a potent secret of overcoming this present world of evil and of serving unselfishly the world of men. **Not on the things that are upon the earth.** A realistic description of those who mind earthly things is given by Paul in Phil. 3 : 18, 19.

3. **For ye died.** Not *ye are dead*, for they had risen again to a new life, which was spiritual and heavenly. This way of looking at it is not only Pauline, it is peculiar to Paul. See again Rom. 6 : 3–11, and compare Gal. 2 : 20 and 6 : 14. These words are given as the reason for the exhortation of verse 2. **And your life is hid with Christ in God.** Christ, according to the teachings of the whole New Testament, is now hidden from human sight with God; and since Christ is the life of believers and their life is in him, their life is thus hidden in God also. **In God.** These words imply Christ's union with God and our union, though not in the same sense, with God in him.

4. **Who is our life.** Paul's words in Gal. 2 : 20 and Phil. 1 : 21 form a good commentary on this; and a good commentary on the whole verse is found in 1 Jn. 3 : 2.

2. *Things to be put off and away*, 3 : 5–11

5. **Mortify therefore.** Since this is the ideal of your new condition and relations, — dead to the things that are upon the earth and your real life now in union with God, — you are to realize this ideal by actually putting to death whatever is at war with this ideal. You are to carry out this principle of death to the world. **Your members**

upon the earth; °fornication, uncleanness, passion,
evil desire, °and covetousness, the which is idolatry;
6. for which things' sake cometh the wrath of God [1] upon
7. the sons of disobedience; °[2] in the which ye also walked
8. aforetime, when ye lived in these things. °But now
°put ye also away all these; °anger, °wrath, °malice,
°railing, °shameful speaking °out of your mouth:

[1] Some ancient authorities omit *upon the sons of disobedience.* See Eph. 5 : 6.
[2] Or, *amongst whom*

which are upon the earth. That is, your hand, your eye (cf. Matt. 5 : 29, 30), or any bodily organ in so far as it is the seat or organ of lust and sin (Rom. 7 : 23) is to be made dead. This is in perfect accord with the way that Paul speaks of the body as a whole, Rom. 6 : 6, "that the body of sin might be destroyed." It is practically the same in Col. 2 : 11. **Fornication, uncleanness, passion, evil desire.** Paul does not mean that fornication, uncleanness, passion, and evil desire are the members that are to be put to death; that is, these words are not in apposition with the word "members," as some take them. Others make them the object of the word "put away" in verse 8, below. This is not necessary. They may be taken as the accusative of general reference, thus: your members, the members of your body, are to be put to death, *i.e.*, made as good as dead, so far as fornication is concerned, and not only so far as fornication is concerned, but dead as to any form or degree of lustful impurity, heat of carnal passion, or unchaste longing. **And covetousness, the which is idolatry,** or, *since it is idolatry.* This vividly recalls the words of Jesus in Mt. 6 : 24, "the lust for wealth sets riches in the place of God." Carnal impurity and covetousness were the two principal vices of the ancient world — and of the modern world.

7. **In the which.** In the practice of which vices ye too, Christians though you now are, formerly indulged, when your life was spent in the midst and atmosphere of such things.

8. **But now.** Since you have become Christians. **Ye also.** You as well as other Christians. **Put away.** Put off, lay aside, have done with, these things once for all. **Anger.** A settled state of ill feeling. **Wrath.** An outburst of passion. **Malice.** A vicious disposition nursing a grudge and seeking an opportunity to commit injury. **Railing.** Evil speaking, slander. **Shameful speaking.** Abusive language. **Out of your mouth.** These words are to be taken with railing and shameful speaking, and vividly picture these as pouring out of the mouth.

9. °lie not one to another; seeing that ye have put off
10. °the old man with his doings, °and have put on the new man, °which is being renewed unto knowledge
11. °after the image of him that created him: °where there cannot be °Greek and Jew, °circumcision and uncircumcision, °barbarian, Scythian, °bondman, free-
12. man: °but Christ is all, and in all.

9. **Lie not one to another.** In Eph. 4 : 25 this is differently and more softly said: "Putting away falsehood, speak ye truth each one with his neighbor." **The old man.** A characteristically Pauline conception, found in Rom. 6 : 6. The old man, representing the pre-Christian moral state as personified, was in each case put off, renounced, by the individual through his conversion to Christ.

10. **And have put on the new man.** The positive aspect of the transformation realized at the time of conversion. The new man is the new Christian moral state conceived as personified and spoken of objectively and as becoming individually assumed under the figure of being put on. This putting off of the old man and putting on of the new is a total change of mind and attitude and is not essentially different from what takes place in repentance and faith. **Which is being renewed unto knowledge.** This participle also is the present and expresses a continuous process and progress of renewal. The continuous result of this continuous renewal is the continuous increase of knowledge. The same thought, substantially, is found in Rom. 12 : 2 and Col. 1 : 9. **After the image of him that created him.** Probably a reference to Gen. 1 : 26–28.

11. **Where there cannot be.** That is, where the old nature has been laid aside and the new put on, all are essentially the same, and there can no longer be the differences that men have in mind when they think and speak of Greek and Jew, etc. All such distinctions as would repel and separate men from each other disappear in their essential likeness as Christians. **Greek and Jew.** Distinction of race and nationality. **Circumcision and uncircumcision.** Distinction of religious ceremonial. **Barbarian, Scythian.** The usual antithesis of barbarian is Greek; but as that has already been used as the antithesis of Jew, he here uses a climax instead of an antithesis, and draws a distinction in the degree of barbarism. There is, for those who have put on the new nature, no distinction of barbarous and more barbarous, of savage and lowest savage. **Bondman, freeman.** He returns to the use of antithesis. What is here meant is more fully elaborated in what he says to slaves and masters in 3 : 22–4 : 1. **But Christ is all.** Christ is everything. If *He* is in a man, that supplies the lack

°Put on °therefore, °as God's elect, holy and beloved, °a heart of compassion, °kindness, °humility,
13. °meekness, °longsuffering; °forbearing one another, and °forgiving each other, °if any man have a complaint against any; °even as [1] the Lord forgave you,
14. so also do ye: °and above all these things *put on*
15. love, °which is the bond of perfectness. °And let

[1] Many ancient authorities read *Christ.*

of everything else, such as culture, pedigree, freedom. If Christ is in a slave, that slave is a freeman; if Christ is in a Scythian savage, that makes him a nobleman as good as a Roman patrician or a Greek philosopher.

3. *Things to be put on,* 3 : 12–17

12. **Put on.** The following verses present the positive aspect, as verses 5–10 presented the negative aspect, of the moral transformation they were to seek and to realize. **Therefore.** Since you have put on the new man (verse 10), it would be a contradiction not to put on those dispositions and virtues which constitute the new character. **As God's elect.** You now constitute a new order of nobility among men; you are the chosen ones of God. As members of this new and heavenly order also, *noblesse oblige.* And since all conventional and worldly distinctions are done away and you must realize and illustrate the unity of the people of God, it will be necessary in everyday life to have and practice the new virtues of self-effacement and mutual forbearance, such as, **a heart of compassion** = tenderness and sympathy. **Kindness** is the opposite of severity. **Humility.** Not toward God but toward each other. It is the opposite of haughtiness. **Meekness.** The opposite of hardness, roughness. The last two are the words that Jesus used of himself (Matt. 11 : 29). **Longsuffering.** The opposite of resentment or revenge.

13. **Forbearing one another.** The virtues just mentioned are to manifest themselves in active conduct. **Forgiving each other.** Your forbearance is to go to the extent of forgiving wrongs done yourselves. **If any man have a complaint against any.** The order in Greek is more striking, *If any against any have a complaint.* **Even as the Lord forgave you, so also do ye.** A good commentary on this is contained in the words of Jesus, Matt. 18 : 23 ff.

14. **And above all these things.** Love is to be put on like an upper garment. **Which is the bond of perfectness.** In view of what Paul elsewhere says of love (Rom. 13 : 10, Gal. 5 : 14) the meaning of this

the peace of Christ [1] rule in your hearts, °to the which
also ye were called in one body: °and be ye thankful.
16. °Let the word of [2] Christ °dwell in you richly °in all
wisdom; °teaching and admonishing [3] one another
°with psalms *and* hymns *and* spiritual °songs, °singing
17. with grace in your hearts unto God. And whatso-

[1] Gr. *arbitrate.* [2] Some ancient authorities read *the Lord:* others, *God.* [3] Or, *yourselves*

passage is something like this: Love is the one thing that includes, binds in one, all that goes to make up perfection; and this is beautifully shown in that classic of St. Paul, 1 Cor. 13.

15. **And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts.** Let the peace which Christ has put in your hearts be the ruling principle that shall determine all questions and settle all doubts for you. Do nothing, determine on nothing, think nothing, tolerate nothing, that would destroy or disturb that peace. It is the test of everything, by it everything is to be determined. In Phil. 4 : 7 the meaning is practically the same, though the figure is different. There the inward peace of Christ is the sentinel that gives warning of danger and guards from evil; here it is the umpire which decides all questions and determines all conduct. **To the which also ye were called in one body.** Unto which (peace) ye were called so as to become one body, or so that ye are one body as being ruled and led by one spirit. This idea and the ideal of unity are beautifully elaborated in the later of these twin epistles (Eph. 4 : 1–13), an illuminating parallel. **And be ye thankful.** More exactly, continually become thankful. Another note of Paul's thanksgiving habit.

16. **Let the word of Christ** = the message about Christ, which is equivalent to the gospel and its whole content. "The gospel is the word of Christ" (Meyer). **Dwell in you.** Let it be continually in your minds and hearts. This could be done by regular habitual reading, hearing, meditation, study, contemplation, and especially by obedience. **In all wisdom.** These words are best taken with those which follow, namely, **teaching and admonishing one another.** You are to teach and faithfully to advise and warn one another in the use of every sort of wisdom. **With psalms and hymns,** etc. These words are not to be construed with teaching and admonishing, but with the words that follow. *Psalms* are probably those in the Old Testament. *Hymns* are songs of praise to God. **Songs.** This word in itself means any kind of song, hence the word *spiritual* has to be added to restrict its meaning here. **Singing with grace in your**

ever ye do, in word or in deed, *do* all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.

IX. The Relations of the Family Life are to be regulated with Recognition of our Subjection to Jesus as Lord, 3 : 18–4 : 1

18. °Wives, be in subjection to your husbands, as is
19. fitting in the Lord. °Husbands, love your wives, and

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hearts. Singing with the realization and under the inspiration of the grace of God in your hearts. Coming from Paul, this is a great tribute and testimony to the value and power of song.

Verse 17 is a general rule for life. All things, everything whatsoever, is to be done, everything is to be said, in the name, that is, in recognition of the authority, and in dependence on the help, of him who is Lord of all — Jesus. Our actions in all the relations of life are to be done in the recognition and under the direction of this rule, as, for example, the domestic relations: 1. Wives, 3 : 18; 2. Husbands, 3 : 19; 3. Children, 3 : 20; 4. Fathers, 3 : 21; 5. Slaves, 3 : 22–25; 6. Masters, 4 : 1. Why does Paul stop to give such minute directions concerning the relations and duties of the home life? Because doubtless he recognized that if the home life is rightly ordered and regulated and made ideal, it would make the rest easy. Hence he specifies each of the relations of the family life and would keep them all in proper subjection and regulation by the enthronement of Jesus as Lord and Ruler *there*. It is well to be reminded that Paul not only did not overlook the home and the home life, he took the pains to give special and earnest instructions for the realization of an ideal home life.

18. **Wives, be in subjection to your husbands.** This and the following injunctions are examples under the general exhortation of verse 17. This command to wives is considerably elaborated in the parallel passage in Eph. 5 : 22–24, while that to husbands is drawn out to much greater length in Eph. 5 : 25–33, indicating that Colossians was written first.

19. **Husbands, love your wives, and be not bitter against them.** It is difficult to say which, in some instances, is more difficult, whether for wives to be in subjection to their husbands, or for the husbands to love their wives; but both have to be done as a matter of subjection

20. be not bitter against them. °Children, obey your
parents in all things, for this is well-pleasing °in the
21. Lord. °Fathers, provoke not your children, °that they
22. be not discouraged. °[1] Servants, obey in all things
them that are °your [2] masters according to the flesh;
°not with eyeservice, °as men-pleasers, °but in single-
23. ness of heart, fearing the Lord: °whatsoever ye do,

[1] Gr. *Bond-servants.* [2] Gr. *lords.*

to the Lord. The full and hearty recognition of his authority would settle many difficulties in practical life.

20. **Children, obey your parents . . . for this is well-pleasing.** The obedience of children is a well-pleasing thing, an agreeable thing, an ethically beautiful thing. **In the Lord.** It is an especially well-pleasing and winsome thing when it is done with the spirit and motive that are inspired by a consciousness of its being done in Christ and in obedience to his will.

21. **Fathers, provoke not your children.** The word "irritate" is better. This irritation is caused by unjust or oversevere treatment, which the child, though provoked to anger, must bear without any hope of relief. Note that this prohibition is directed to fathers. This was partly because in the Græco-Roman world they were in control of the family and partly because they were more likely to cause irritation by severity than mothers. Or possibly the word "fathers" was meant to include both parents. **That they be not discouraged.** Under protracted irritation the child is likely to become despondent, hopeless, sullen, losing all courage and spirit and giving up all effort to obey.

22. **Servants.** The word is the regular Greek word for slaves. They were present and heard the letter read, including the things said especially to them as well as to their masters. **Your masters according to the flesh.** These words imply another relation, belonging to the higher spiritual sphere where Christ is master. **Not with eye-service.** This compound word, coined perhaps by Paul, is in the plural number and denotes acts of service done under the eye of the master, implying faithlessness in the master's absence. **As men-pleasers.** This word implies that there was One higher than men whom they were to seek to please. **But in singleness of heart, fearing the Lord.** With the single purpose of serving the Lord in such a way as to be pleasing to him, and with fear lest in your service to your masters you come short of pleasing the Lord.

23. **Whatsoever ye do.** In everything, no matter how difficult,

°work [1] heartily, as unto the Lord, and not unto men;
24. °knowing that from the Lord ye shall receive the recompense of the inheritance: °ye serve the Lord
25. Christ. °For he that doeth wrong shall [2] receive again for the wrong [2] that he hath done: °and there is no
4. respect of persons. °Masters, render unto your servants that which is just and [3] equal; °knowing that ye also have a Master in heaven.

[1] Gr. *from the soul.* [2] Gr. *receive again the wrong.* [3] Gr. *equality.*

disagreeable, or painful. **Work heartily, as unto the Lord, and not unto men.** The presence and approval of the Lord is more strongly urged by Paul in the case of slaves than of others because their situation was more difficult and they needed more the inspiration of an unusual motive. The word here translated "work" means *to carry out, to complete.*

24. **Knowing** = Since ye know. If you do not get any recognition or reward from your earthly master for your honest and faithful service, you know that you will get a full recompense from your master in heaven. And that recompense will consist in the future possession of eternal blessedness — the inheritance of the saints in glory. **Ye serve the Lord Christ.** Many very able commentators take this as imperative, Serve ye the Lord Christ. But the indicative suits the connection better. The meaning is this: In serving your earthly masters, as I have said, you are serving him who is the Lord Christ, and therefore you may rest assured that you shall by no means lose your reward.

25. **For he that doeth wrong shall receive again for the wrong.** This evidently refers to the masters, though it is said to the slaves for the purpose of assuring them that any unjust treatment they might have to endure from their masters would be punished by the Lord of slave and master. **And there is no respect of persons.** Before that tribunal master and slave stand on the same footing, and each one will be dealt with in absolute accordance with his conduct and character, and without reference to the social relation he may have occupied by accident in this world. In Eph. 6 : 9 this is said *to* the masters by way of preventing them from mistreating their slaves. What an impression these words would make when read in the hearing of the whole church, where masters and slaves were gathered together and heard them read at the same time!

1. **Masters.** The injunctions to masters are amplified and strengthened in the corresponding paragraph in Ephesians (6 : 9). **Knowing**

X. Practical Instructions and Conclusion, 4 : 2–18

2. °Continue stedfastly in prayer, °watching therein
3. °with thanksgiving; °withal praying for us also, °that God may open unto us a door for the word, °to speak

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that ye also have a Master in heaven. And treat your slaves as you would that that Master should treat you — an application to a special relation of the general principle of that "rule" which comprehends all conduct and summarizes the ethics of all human relations. The disproportionate length of the advice given to slaves in the paragraph on domestic relations and duties is not due, as some suppose, to the case of Onesimus and Paul's desire to impress him with the duties of a slave. The same proportion is observed in Ephesians, where Onesimus was not known. Furthermore, Onesimus had already been reconstructed and brought by Paul in person to the right view and the right spirit, as we may see in the charming epistle which Paul wrote to his master, Philemon. It was because of *his sympathy* for slaves that Paul devoted more space in the letter to them. Concerning slavery in Paul's day, Dr. Bruce, in his able work on "The Kingdom of God," has these wise words to say: "Christianity does not say that slavery is wrong and follow up the assertion by an agitation for abolition and by stirring up a servile insurrection. It says, 'A slave is a man and may be a noble man,' and leaves the idea to work as a leaven, slowly but surely toward emancipation and freedom."

1. *Perseverance in prayer*, 4 : 2–4

2. **Continue stedfastly in prayer.** Continuing steadfast is the opposite of growing weary, fainting, giving it up. **Watching therein.** Since holding on in prayer often tends to produce listlessness, Paul puts them on their guard against this tendency. This does not mean what Jesus meant when he said, "Watch and pray." **With thanksgiving.** Here is Paul's thanksgiving habit again. He joins thanksgiving with "everything" and commends it in everything, but especially prayer. There are two very striking examples, one in Phil. 4 : 6, one in 1 Thess. 5 : 17.

3. **Withal praying for us also.** A beautiful example of Paul's confidence in his brother Christians and his dependence on their coöperation and help. **That God may open unto us a door for the word.** That is, for the gospel. Paul did not ask their prayers for his personal benefit, or for his comfort, or even for relief and deliverance from affliction and suffering, but only that God would give him an opportunity to make known the glad tidings. **To speak the mystery of Christ.** The gospel had come to Paul as the unveiling of a secret

the mystery of Christ, °for which I am also in bonds;
4. °that I may make it manifest, as I ought to speak.
5. °Walk in wisdom °toward them that are without,
6. °[1] redeeming the time. °Let your speech be always

[1] Gr. *buying up the opportunity.*

which before was hidden. That secret was Christ, Christ the life-giving spirit. In order to understand this one must recall what Paul said about *not* knowing Christ after the flesh (2 Cor. 5 : 16) and what he says about God's *revealing* his Son in him (Gal. 1 : 16) and as a life-giving spirit (1 Cor. 15 : 45). In his capacity and office of *life-giving spirit*, men cannot discern, cannot discover, cannot know, Christ. He must be revealed. Compare 1 Cor. 2 : 10, 12. Thus Christ was Paul's secret, Paul's gospel, Paul's all in all. **For which I am also in bonds.** These words indicate what he probably meant when he asked them to pray that God would open unto him a door for the word, *i.e.*, the gospel. He tells Philemon that he hoped through the prayers of himself and the other Colossians to be liberated, Philem. 22.

4. **That I may make it manifest, as I ought to speak.** He still has in mind the conception of Christ as a mystery, an unrevealed secret. He asks them to pray not only that God would give him an opportunity for preaching the glad tidings, but that he will enable Paul to unveil, make manifest, the secret in the way that he ought. How unfailing and how beautiful is Paul's humility!

2. *Their duty toward those who were not believers*, 4 : 5–6

5. **Toward them that are without.** His request concerning an opportunity to make Christ known has turned his heart toward them that are outside the church and without the knowledge of Christ. So he reminds the Colossians of their relation and debt to the outsiders. **Walk in wisdom.** Conduct yourselves wisely. So conduct yourselves and your way and manner of living as to attract, impress, convince, convict outsiders. **Redeeming the time.** The marginal rendering is not only more accurate, it is incomparably better every way. They are to pay the cost, whatever it may be, of improving the opportunity, as it occurs, in every case (note the definite article), the opportunity of winning those who are still unsaved. This will cost something. It will sometimes cost selfish ease, personal convenience, comfort, reputation, money; in any case, in every case, however, they are to pay the price, purchase for themselves the opportunity, and save their unsaved neighbors or friends.

6. **Let your speech be always.** The tactful use of speech was an example of the means by which they were to conciliate and win to

°with grace, °seasoned with salt, °that ye may know
7. °how ye ought to answer each one.

All my affairs °shall Tychicus make known unto you, the beloved brother and faithful minister and
8. fellow-servant in the Lord: whom I have sent unto you for this very purpose, that ye may know our estate,
9. and that he may comfort your hearts; °together with Onesimus, the faithful and beloved brother, °who is one

faith those who were still unbelievers. **With grace.** With pleasingness. Compare Rom. 15 : 2, "Let each one of us please his neighbor for his good and unto his edification." By the winsomeness of their conversation they were to try to win their heathen friends. **Seasoned with salt.** Who has not heard of the Attic salt? Brightness, cleverness, wit, is, in this sense, the salt of language. It gives it flavor, makes it taste. But Paul hardly means that here. He has already commended pleasingness of speech, and does not need to do it again. Salt is the common antiseptic of the world. It preserves from corruption and renders wholesome. The opposite would be that which Paul forbids in his directions about conversation in Eph. 4 : 29, "Let no *corrupt speech* proceed out of your mouth." Their conversation was to be pleasing, gracious, but it was also to be pure and wholesome. **That ye may know.** In short, he says, the thing is to know. **How ye ought to answer each one.** Your conversation is to be fitting in each particular case, exactly adapted to each individual person. What a standard! and yet within the reach of every Christian who has the disposition and the willingness to do what Paul here commends.

3. *The mission and messages of Tychicus and Onesimus,* 4 : 7–9

7. **Shall Tychicus make known unto you.** Tychicus was the bearer of the epistle to the Ephesians (so called) as well as of this epistle. In Eph. 6 : 21, 22 almost the same language is used as here.

9. **Together with Onesimus.** Onesimus was the runaway slave of Philemon. He had become a Christian while with Paul in Rome, and he was sent back to his master by Paul. The full history of the case is given in the beautiful letter which Paul wrote to Philemon and sent by the hand of Onesimus at the same time that the epistle to the Colossians and that to the Ephesians (so called) were sent. **Who is one of you.** Onesimus had lived at Colossæ before he ran away and went to Rome. This is proof that Philemon lived at Colossæ and was one of them, though his name is not mentioned in the epistle to the Colossians.

of you. They shall make known unto you all things
that *are done* here.
10. Aristarchus my fellow-prisoner saluteth you, and Mark,
the cousin of Barnabas (touching whom ye received
commandments; if he come unto you, receive him),
11. and Jesus, which is called Justus, who are of the circum-
cision: these only *are my* fellow-workers unto the
kingdom of God, men that have been a comfort unto
12. me. °Epaphras, who is one of you, a [1] servant of Christ
Jesus, saluteth you, always striving for you in his
prayers, that ye may stand perfect and fully assured in
13. all the will of God. For I bear him witness, that he
hath much labour for you, and °for them in Laodicea,
14. and for them in Hierapolis. Luke, the beloved physician,
15. and Demas salute you. °Salute the brethren that are

[1] Gr. *bond-servant.*

4. *Greetings from Paul and those who were with him,* 4 : 10–17

10. Aristarchus, Mark, Demas, and Luke are mentioned in the letter to Philemon, verses 23 and 24. Aristarchus was a Thessalonian and a travelling companion of Paul (Acts 19 : 29; 27 : 2). Mark, who on a former occasion (Acts 15 : 37, 38) deserted Paul, was now again with him in prison and is commended to the Colossians. **Epaphras, who is one of you.** We learn from chap. 1 : 7 that Epaphras, who was the founder of the church of Colossæ and had for some time been their pastor, was with Paul in prison at Rome when this letter was written. It was he who had told Paul about the situation at Colossæ which occasioned the writing of the present epistle (chap. 1 : 8). Whether he was detained as a prisoner at Rome or chose to remain there with Paul of his own accord cannot be known. However, he was still interested in the Colossians to such an extent that he was unceasingly engaged in "agonizing" prayer for them. **For them in Laodicea, and for them in Hierapolis.** Epaphras had evidently been pastor of the churches at Laodicea and Hierapolis as well as of that at Colossæ. He seems to have been a sort of circuit-rider with a circuit of three appointments. **Salute the brethren that are in Laodicea.** Why Paul did not send his salutations to the church at Hierapolis also, we do not know.

in Laodicea, and [1] Nymphas, and the church that is in
16. [2] their house. And °when [3] this epistle hath been read among you, cause that it be read also in the church of the Laodiceans; °and that ye also read the epistle
17. from Laodicea. And °say to Archippus, Take heed to the ministry which thou hast received in the Lord, that thou fulfil it.
18. °The salutation of me Paul with mine own hand. °Remember my bonds. °Grace be with you.

[1] The Greek may represent *Nympha*. [2] Some ancient authorities read *her*. [3] Gr. *the*

16. **When this epistle hath been read among you.** That is, when it had been read publicly in the hearing of the assembled church of the Colossians, they were to send it to Laodicea, about eleven miles distant, and have it read to the assembled church at that place. **And that ye also read the epistle from Laodicea.** This is a clause of keen interest. It has led many able scholars to the belief that the letter referred to is that which is called the epistle to the Ephesians. This is probably the case. The so-called letter to the Ephesians was evidently not a letter for the Ephesians only, but a circular letter which was to be sent to different churches in that part of Asia Minor where Ephesus and Laodicea were situated. One copy of the letter would be — and was — sent to Ephesus, and another to Laodicea, and so on. The reason why Paul tells the Colossians to get and read the letter from Laodicea and not from Ephesus was that Laodicea was nearer. But see the Introduction to the epistle to the Ephesians in this volume.

17. **Say to Archippus.** Who was Archippus? He is mentioned by Paul in the opening sentence of his epistle to Philemon in such a way as to suggest that he was in some sense a member of Philemon's household. He is called by Paul "our fellow-soldier." But he seems to be a little slow, and Paul here sends him a special warning to the effect that he'd better wake up and attend to the special ministry which was committed to him. He may have been the successor of Epaphras as pastor of the Colossian church.

18. **The salutation of me Paul with mine own hand.** When Paul goes to send his own greetings, he takes the pen from the amanuensis and writes this sentence *with his own hand*. Feeling the weight of the handcuff on his arm, he adds, pathetically, **Remember my bonds.** But instantly he forgets himself and thinks of them with the prayer, **Grace be with you**, a great prayer when we recall what grace meant to Paul and what it means in his noble epistles.

INTRODUCTION

I. To Whom was "Ephesians" Addressed?

It is a misnomer and quite misleading to call this the epistle to the Ephesians. The so-called epistle to the Ephesians was not written to the Ephesians — or for the Ephesians, — alone. If so, it could not have been written by Paul. We must give up either our belief that it was written for the Ephesians or our belief that it was written by Paul. If Paul wrote it, it could not have been written for the Ephesians, as the following considerations will show:

1. We know that Paul preached at Ephesus (Acts 18 : 19); that he returned there a second time (Acts 19 : 1); that he preached for three months in the synagogue at Ephesus (Acts 19 : 8); that he then preached there two years longer in a public hall and with such success that "all they which dwelt in Asia heard the word of the Lord, both Jews and Greeks" (Acts 19 : 10). It is probable also that he remained there some time after this (Acts 19 : 22; 20 : 1). At any rate he himself reminds the elders of the church at Ephesus that he spent three years as their pastor and the personal friend and adviser of each one of the members of the church there (Acts 20 : 31): "Remember," he says, "that by the space of three years I ceased not to admonish every one night and day." His personal relation to the elders of the church was so intimate and affectionate that their final separation from him makes one of the most pathetic scenes in the New Testament (Acts 20 : 36–38). If we may judge by the history that we have in the book of Acts, Paul's relation with the church at Ephesus was more personal, more intimate, more tender and affectionate, than with any other church.

2. We know in general that Paul's personal attachments were very strong and tender. It was especially so at Ephesus, if we may trust the beautiful story of Acts 20 : 36–38. He knew and he loved men, not by the mass, but by the man: Acts 20 : 31, "*every one of you with tears.*"

3. We know that on this account and as a matter of fact when he wrote letters to various churches he was in the habit of mentioning people by name and sending special personal greetings or messages to them. On account of his long and peculiarly intimate association with the members of the church at Ephesus, we should naturally and confidently expect to find more personal greetings and messages in a letter written to them than in any other of all his epistles. But such is not the case in this so-called epistle to the Ephesians. In it we do not find the slightest personal reference to a single individual from beginning to end. He does not once address them as "brethren." The letter does not betray the slightest intimation that he ever had the slightest personal association with them, whether as a church or as individuals.

4. Indeed what he says in the epistle itself implies that his knowledge of them was by hearsay and not of a personal character at all: Eph. 1 : 15; 4 : 20, 21.

5. What he says in 3 : 2–4 implies that their knowledge of him was by hearsay and not personal. All of which would be not only unnatural and unaccountable, but inconceivable, in a letter written to and for the church at Ephesus by the Apostle Paul.

II. Authorship of the Epistle

Two suppositions are open to us; two explanations are possible.

1. Paul did not write the epistle.

2. Paul wrote it to some other church or churches. Let us examine the first of these suppositions.

(1) The letter purports to have been written by Paul.

His name is the first word in it and it opens with his regular form of salutation, 1 : 1, 2. Of course, this does not prove that Paul wrote it. But it excludes the doubt of the Pauline authorship which the absence of this regular Pauline formula would suggest.

(2) He speaks again in his own name in a passage of considerable length and of extraordinary significance, the whole substance, spirit, style, and language of which are vibrant with his unique and compelling individuality. This is the remarkable paragraph in 3 : 1–13. Undesigned echoes of this same Pauline sort occur at 4 : 1, "I the prisoner in the Lord," and at 6 : 20, "For which I am an ambassador in chains." The epistle has the unmistakable Pauline throb throughout.

(3) It is, throughout, in full, unbroken accord with what we know of St. Paul's unique position in the second third of the first century. The contents of the epistle suit Paul's relation to the Gentile world as their apostle; his relation to the question of Jew and Gentile as shown in Acts and Romans; and the relation of Jewish and Gentile believers, as may be seen in a comparison of Eph. 2 : 11–22 with Rom. 11 : 17, 18. The epistle *claims* for the Gentiles an equality and union with the Jews in entire harmony with Paul's position as shown in Romans and Galatians, but inconceivable in the second century, when the Gentiles had attained not only a recognized position but a predominance in the church.

(4) The epistle is saturated, not only with the spirit of Paul, but with the great outstanding conceptions which are characteristically, uniquely, Pauline.

Take out of the epistle all that is Pauline, and about all that will be left will be the punctuation points and the figures that indicate chapter and verse. Nobody ever claimed that Paul wrote these. Here are some of the great "Paulinisms" of the epistle: election, foreordination, adoption, redemption through the blood of Christ, the sovereignty of God, the grace of God, salvation by faith,

repudiation of works and exclusion of boasting, the abolition of the law, the inclusion and call of the Gentiles, the revelation to him of this secret, his office as apostle of the Gentiles, the fulness of the times, Christ the head of the body, the church Christ's body, the members of the church members of one another, the unity of the spirit, diversity of gifts and functions, the condition of unregenerate heath nism and of unregenerate Judaism, the old man, the new man, the new creation in Christ, his Christian mysticism, the believer is in Christ and Christ in the believer, his ethical ideal and the way of realizing it, his emphasis on thanksgiving, his philosophy of history, his "passion for the absolute," his peculiarities of style, long involved sentences, broken grammatical constructions, his digressions, his figures, his mixing of figures, the church a body, a building, a temple, his fondness for martial figures.

(5) It is now universally agreed that Colossians was written by Paul. That being so, then everything in Colossians that is reproduced in Ephesians or assumed in Ephesians, though not elsewhere found in Paul's epistles, is Pauline.

(6) It is now generally accepted also that the epistle mentioned in Col. 4 : 16 as the epistle from Laodicea is our epistle; and if so, it was written by Paul.

(7) The Pauline authorship of the epistle is now accepted by practically all scholars, such as Harnack, Jülicher, etc. (See Jülicher, *Introduction*, pages 146, 147, New York, G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1904.)

If Paul did not write it, there must have been two Pauls; as some one said concerning the *Phædo:* if Plato did not write the *Phædo*, there were two Platos.

III. Destination and Purpose of the Epistle

Explanation No. 1 then falls to the ground. Paul did write the epistle. It remains to examine explanation No. 2, namely, that it was not written for the Ephesians alone, but

for others than the Ephesians or others with the Ephesians. But on that supposition how are we to explain the words *at Ephesus* in the very first verse? It will be noticed that a note in the margin of the Revised Version records the fact that "Some very ancient authorities omit the words *at Ephesus*." The two oldest and best uncial manuscripts in existence omit them. These are the Vatican manuscript (B) and the Sinaitic manuscript (ℵ). Besides these, there is also a cursive manuscript which is designated 67^2 that omits them. These, though few in number, are of such great value and authority that so great a scholar as Bishop Lightfoot says that a reading in St. Paul's epistles supported by ℵ and B and 67^2 almost always represents the original text itself. Basil, a church father of the fourth century, expressly rejects the words *at Ephesus*. Speaking of the text with these words omitted, he says, "Thus did our predecessors hand it down to us and thus we have found it in the old witnesses or copies." Origen in the third century distinctly says the words *at Ephesus* were not in the text which he used; and he proceeds to give a metaphysical sense to the remaining words as they stand without them. Tertullian in the second century says that Marcion, a great Gnostic teacher of the same century (about 145 to 150 A.D.), called this the epistle to the Laodiceans; and in refuting that view Tertullian does not cite these words in the text, as he certainly would have done had they been in his text, but quotes only the title, "To the Ephesians," which, of course, is and was no part of the epistle itself.

These witnesses, bearing their own testimony and representing authorities more ancient and numerous than themselves, make it practically certain that the words *at Ephesus* were not in the original text. In other words Paul did not write them there at all. In this view practically all the textual critics and the editors agree. Furthermore, if the words *at Ephesus* had been in the original, we can think of no reason for leaving them out. On the other hand, if they were *not* in the original, it is easy to see why and how

they would get into some manuscripts and so be handed down in some manuscripts. Besides, if Paul himself wrote them or had them written in the original, that meant that the letter was intended for the Ephesians alone, as the epistle to the Colossians was intended for the Colossians alone; and we could never understand or explain why he should write to the church which he knew more intimately and affectionately than any other a letter totally destitute of any personal allusion or tender expression.

The probability, then, is that this was a circular letter intended for the various churches of the Roman province of Asia, including Laodicea, Hierapolis, Smyrna, Sardis, Philadelphia, Ephesus, and others; and a copy of it was sent by Tychicus to each one of these congregations (6 : 20, 21). The seven churches to whom the letters in Revelation, chapters II and III, were addressed belonged doubtless to the same group. And similarly, Peter addresses his first epistle to the churches of the region of Asia Minor as a *circular letter:* "Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, to the elect who are sojourners of the Dispersion in Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia" (1 Pt. 1 : 1).

Moreover, in the epistle to the Colossians Paul directs them to cause that epistle to be read in the church of the Laodiceans and charges them to get and read "the epistle from Laodicea" (Col. 4 : 16). This "letter from Laodicea" was in all probability our so-called epistle to the Ephesians. But in writing to the Colossians Paul directed them to get the copy of it which had been sent to Laodicea, because Laodicea was not far from Colossæ, being only about eleven miles distant. Lightfoot expresses the now generally accepted view on this subject when he says: "There are good reasons for believing that St. Paul here (Col. 4 : 16) alludes to the so-called epistle to the Ephesians, which was, in fact, a circular letter addressed to the principal churches of proconsular Asia. Tychicus was obliged to pass through Laodicea on his way from Rome to Colossæ and would leave a copy of the letter there before the Colossian letter was delivered."

How, then, did the letter come to be called the epistle to the Ephesians? As the first copy of the letter would naturally be delivered at Ephesus by Tychicus going from Rome to Colossæ; as Ephesus was the metropolis of proconsular Asia and its church would therefore stand first in that whole region; and as the church at Ephesus had been founded by Paul, had had specially intimate relations with Paul and a special claim on him, — she would very naturally come to regard the epistle as specially her own. This would as naturally be conceded; and when Paul's epistles were collected together and a designation was needed for this one, nothing would be more natural and appropriate than that the Ephesians should be allowed to call it theirs. So "To the Ephesians" was written over it for a title. This title soon found its way into the text in some copies and so it stands in some, but not in the very best, manuscripts, to this day. The second epistle to the Corinthians was addressed by Paul "to the church which is at Corinth *with all the saints which are in the whole of Achaia*" (Greece), 2 Cor. 1 : 1. And yet when a title was needed for this epistle, it was "To the Corinthians B," and not to the Christians of Achaia. A very instructive parallel is this.

But how are we to read the verse with the words *at Ephesus* left out?

Some suppose that a blank space was left in the original copies of the letter, in which the name of each particular church was to be written as Tychicus delivered it, or was to be supplied orally by him who read the letter to the assembled church. On this supposition, however, we should expect to find some manuscripts with one or another of these local designations, whereas there is not one. It is either Ephesus or none. Moreover, there is a manifest incongruity in saying "the saints who are at Ephesus [or Laodicea] and faithful, in Christ Jesus." Being *at Ephesus* and being *faithful in Christ Jesus* are heterogeneous thoughts which it is harsh to couple together. It is better to read the sentence thus: "To the saints who are also (or indeed) faithful

in Christ Jesus"; though this is not entirely free from difficulty. The collocation of these words in Col. 1 : 2 is similar but not identical. The words "who are also faithful in Christ Jesus" seem to be intended as a more exact description, a closer identification, of those he has called saints; for that word, meaning *set apart* for God, might be used also of the Jews (see 2 : 19). At any rate, the sentence is capable of a grammatical construction and yields a good sense without the words *at Ephesus*. We should then cease to think of this epistle as the epistle to the Ephesians and think of it as one which, free from local associations or limitations or personal interests, was written for and addressed to Paul's beloved Gentiles, whose Apostle he was and rejoiced to be. Take a few sentences of the epistle: "Wherefore remember that aforetime ye, the Gentiles, were separate from Christ," etc. This whole paragraph (2 : 11–22) pulsates with the interest which he feels for his Gentiles. Take 3 : 1–13, "For which cause, I Paul the prisoner of Christ Jesus in behalf of you Gentiles," etc. This paragraph fairly throbs with the joyful consciousness he has of the supreme honor and yet fearful responsibility of his selection and consecration by God to the task of making effective the revelation that the Gentiles were included equally with the Jews in God's gracious provision of salvation. Looked at from this new point of view, it becomes a new epistle. It might well be called The Epistle of Paul to the Gentile Christians of Asia.

With this view of its destination we are better prepared to understand the breadth and length and height and depth of its scope. Having succeeded in his long and earnest effort to preserve in unity the two conflicting elements of the Christian church, and having in the epistle to the Colossians met the new and final doctrinal emergency with a full, explicit, formal statement of the nature, person, and relations of Christ, his mind is free, and he has the leisure in his Roman imprisonment to expound what is his final conception of the meaning and aim of the Christian revelation. And this

he does in a manner worthy of the theme and worthy of the man in our noble epistle.

If the Christians of this day have no mind to study, no capacity to appreciate, and no disposition to realize in life the contents of this transcendent letter of the noblest and deepest of Christ's interpreters, those of some future day will have; and Paul and the Holy Ghost have not written it in vain, Acts 15 : 28.

IV. Analysis of the Epistle

If it had occurred to Paul that, some two thousand years after he had written this epistle, men would be engaged in efforts to analyze it, he might have made it more formal; but inevitably he would have made it less vital, as our modern preachers do in their formal "discourses." But as vitality without formality is better than formality without vitality, we may well be thankful that we have this great epistle as it is, even though it baffle our attempts to give a formal analysis of it.

Its main outlines may be indicated in a general way as follows:

I. The salutation, 1 : 1, 2.

II. An outburst of lofty praise to God for redemption and its blessings, 1 : 3–14. See further analysis of this paragraph on pages 68, 69, 70 of commentary.

III. Thanksgiving for what the Gentile Christians were and prayer for what the Apostle wanted them to be, 1 : 15–23.

IV. The supernatural work which God had wrought in them; and this in order that they might spend their lives in work for him — and all through his grace, 2 : 1–10.

V. The reconciliation and reunification of the two sundered parts of humanity — Jews and Gentiles — through the cross of Christ, 2 : 11–22.

VI. Paul's unique and God-appointed relation to and part in the reuniting of disunited humanity in Christ, 3 : 1–13.

VII. Paul's lofty prayer and prophetic doxology for them, 3 : 14–21.

VIII. The lofty motives he urges on them for *realizing* this unity, and the means God has provided for realizing it, 4 : 1–16.

IX. The manner of life they are to live in correspondence with the lofty origin, plan, and motives of their salvation, 4 : 17–6 : 9.

1. Contrast with their former darkened life as Gentiles, 4 : 17–19.
2. Necessity of experiencing thorough renewal of their inward nature and thorough transformation of the outward life, 4 : 20–24.
3. The details, positive and negative, intermingled all through, first the one, then the other, 4 : 25–5 : 21.
4. The Christian subordination and regulation of three domestic relations — the most vital and determinative of all human relations, 5 : 22–6 : 9.

X. Farewell appeal and closing word, 6 : 10–24.

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THE EPISTLE TO THE EPHESIANS

I. The Salutation, 1 : 1, 2

1. °Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus through the will of God, °to the saints which are °[1] at Ephesus, °and the 1 : 1

[1] Some very ancient authorities omit *at Ephesus.*

1. **Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus, through the will of God.** These opening words are exactly the same as in the twin epistle to the Col. (1 : 1), where see comment. The name of Timothy, which is associated with that of Paul in Colossians, is omitted here. As this is a general epistle, a final comprehensive statement of the meaning and aim of the Christian revelation from the point of view of the ideal and the absolute, Paul doubtless wanted it to have as little as possible of the personal or the incidental. **To the saints.** The epistle was not written for the general public, for just anybody and everybody, but for a certain class of people, a small select circle, the members of which had a common secret, a common experience; who had been enlightened with a new light, initiated into a new life and order; who had been called out, set apart; citizens of a commonwealth not of this world, but of heaven. **At Ephesus.** These words were not written by St. Paul and were not in the original copy. They were afterwards introduced into this place by a process which is described in the Introduction. See also comment on Col. 4 : 16. This letter was for the Gentile Christians of a certain region. **And the faithful in Christ Jesus.** Leaving out the words *at Ephesus*, these words are to be taken in close connection with the word *saints*, and they give a more specific description, a closer identification, of those called saints. For the word *saints* means those set apart for God, and might be applied to the Jews. Compare 2 : 19. So he says, "To the saints, those who are also faithful in (or believers in, Acts 16 : 1; 2 Cor. 6 : 15) Christ Jesus."

2. faithful in Christ Jesus: °Grace to you and peace from
God our Father °and the Lord Jesus Christ.

II. An Outburst of Lofty Praise to God for Redemption and its Blessings, 1:3–14.

3. °Blessed *be* °the God and Father of our Lord Jesus

2. **Grace to you and peace.** Same as in Col. 1:2, where see definition of these words. **And the Lord Jesus Christ.** Jesus Christ is here joined with God as the source of grace and peace. Such distinction is never bestowed upon angels or any other being except Christ. This is perfectly natural to one to whom Christ was what he is shown to be in the epistle to the Colossians, written immediately before this one. God is the Father of Christian believers, having made them his children by giving them through his Spirit the nature and the feeling of children (Rom. 8:15, 16). Christ is Lord, having become the Head of the church (1:22; Col. 1:18) and having won the right to their submission and obedience.

This outburst of praise extends through twelve verses in a single intricately yet skilfully constructed sentence of fathomless import. At first we fail to find a trace of order or method. "It is like the preliminary flight of the eagle, rising and wheeling round, as though for a while uncertain what direction in his boundless freedom he shall take. The Apostle seems to be swept along by his theme, hardly knowing whither it is bearing him. He cannot order his conceptions or close his sentences. And so this swelling doxology runs on and on; in Christ . . . in whom . . . in Him . . . in Him . . . in whom . . . in whom . . . in whom. . . . The will of God, *the will of God*, working itself out to some glorious issue in Christ — this is his theme."

After the prelude of praise in verse 3, Paul sets forth the glorious salvation in Christ:

(1) As already predestined by God in his love, in eternity, verses 4, 5.

(2) As brought about by the death of Christ and realized in the conscious experience of believers, 6, 7.

(3) Made known to them as being in fulfilment of the divine purpose to reunite the universe in Christ, 8–10.

(4) As realized according to the predestination of God, through their faith and the sealing of the Holy Spirit, both by Christians in general and the readers in particular, 11–13.

(5) As issuing in final redemption, 14.

"Standing midway between the eternity past and to come, the Apostle looks backward to the primary source of man's salvation when it lay

Christ, who hath blessed us °with every spiritual
4. blessing °in the heavenly *places* °in Christ: °even as

a silent thought in the mind of God, and forward to the time when it shall have fulfilled its promise and become an eternal consummation. In this grand evolution of the divine plan three stages are marked by a refrain, thrice repeated, *To the praise of his glory*, to the praise of the glory of his grace (6, 12, 14). St. Paul's anthem is thus divided into three strophes: He sings the glory of redeeming love in its past conception, its present bestowments, and its future fruition. The paragraph, forming but one sentence and spun upon a single golden thread, is a piece of thought-music — a sort of *fugue* in which from eternity to eternity the counsel of love is pursued by St. Paul's bold and exulting thought. The middle thought, that of God's *actual bounty* to believers, fills a space equal to that of the other two. But there is a pause within it (at verse 10), which in effect resumes the idea of the first strophe and works it in as a *motif* to the second, carrying on both in full volume till they lose themselves in the third and culminating movement. Throughout the piece there runs in varying expression the phrase 'in Christ,' 'in the Beloved,' 'in Him,' 'in whom,' weaving the whole into subtle continuity. The theme of the entire composition is given in verse 3, which forms no part of the threefold division we have described, but stands as a prelude to it as follows:

'Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ: who hath blessed us: In every blessing of the Spirit, in the heavenly places, in Christ'" (Findlay on Ephesians in the *Expositor's Bible*).

This verse is a sort of prelude to the lofty strain that follows through verse 14, a comprehensive summary, containing implicitly all that is unfolded in order in the verses following.

3. **Blessed be the God . . . who hath blessed us.** Paul pronounces his blessing on God because God has bestowed his blessings on us. **The God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.** The same designation is used by Paul in Rom. 15 : 6; 2 Cor. 1 : 3; 11 : 31. See also Jn. 20 : 17. For meaning see comment on verse 17 of this chapter. **With every spiritual blessing.** The word *spiritual* defines the kind and nature of the blessings bestowed by God on those who believe in Christ. They are spiritual as opposed to natural, material, or temporal. They belong to the invisible realm of the spirit rather than the visible realm of nature and sense. The word *every* measures the scope of the blessings and includes, objectively, every gift or bestowment from the grace that first "conceived the plan" to final glorification; and subjectively, in experience, everything from prevenient grace to complete sanctification. **In the heavenly places.** There is no word in the original for *places*. The Greek delighted in a

he chose us °in him before the foundation of the world,
°that we should be holy and without blemish before

certain suggestive indefiniteness, while we practical moderns are intolerant of anything that does not define to the utmost details. This phrase of Paul, thus defined, probably means blessings that belong to the realm of the heavenly as opposed to the earthly. There is an example of the contrast fully stated in Phil. 3 : 19, 20. **In Christ.** These blessings have their ground in Christ; that is, apart from him there would be no such blessings for us. They include the favorite Pauline conception of union with Christ: these blessings have no ground apart from Christ and can be realized, experienced, only on condition of union with Christ: the blessings, then, that God has blessed believers with are spiritual as opposed to material or temporal, they belong to the realm of the heavenly and not of this world, and they are objectively grounded in Christ and can be subjectively experienced only on condition of union with Christ.

In verses 4, 5, 6a, Paul declares what God did for believers in eternity past, before the creation of man or the foundation of the world. In verses 6b–12 he enumerates the actual bestowments of the grace of God in the experience of believers in time. In verses 13 and 14 he turns his thought to the hope of the future and the God-sealed certainty of final fruition.

4. **Even as he chose us.** Let it not be forgotten that Paul is writing in a sort of confidential intimacy to those who had responded to the call of God, who had "come out from among them and were separate," who were thus God's set apart ones, who had been enlightened, who had had a common but revolutionary and transforming experience, who had been initiated into the new order of those that knew the secret of God. So he is talking secrets, the sacredest secrets, secrets that the world did not know and could not know because they were apprehended through a spiritual sense, as Paul says in 1 Cor. 2 : 14–16. He is writing secret things to those who could understand, just as Jesus spoke secrets to the inner circle of the Eleven in the Upper Room, as he could not have spoken to the promiscuous crowd without. Without keeping this in mind, it is impossible to enter into the spirit and meaning of this transcendent passage or indeed of the epistle as a whole.

The words, **as he chose us**, are to be taken in connection with and dependence upon those going before, thus: He blessed us with every spiritual blessing in accordance with and pursuance of the previous fact, that he chose us in eternity. He chose us, and then in accordance with that choice he blessed us with all spiritual blessing. And he chose us **that we should be holy and without blemish before him.** This was the purpose for which he chose us. **In him.** That is, he

5. [1] him °in love: °having foreordained us °unto adoption as sons °through Jesus Christ unto himself, °according

[1] Or, *him: having in love foreordained us*

chose us as being in Christ, he chose those who would come into union with Christ by faith. It is God that maketh righteous, not only in the sense of justification but also in the sense of sanctification. But he does this only on condition of union with Christ by faith. So it is a perfectly proper way of putting it to say that he selected those who, he foreknew, would thus come into identification with Christ by faith, with the purpose of their being holy and without blemish before him. In other words, he selected these as the ones he would make holy and blameless. That is to say, God was going to make somebody holy and blameless, a thing none but God could do. Who should it be? Whom should he select? What would be the ground of his choice? As everywhere appears in Paul's writings, it was to be those who realized their guilt, their sinfulness, and their utter inability to help themselves, or to make themselves holy; in other words, those who would accept salvation and righteousness as a gift of grace from God on a condition prescribed by God. The condition prescribed by God was that men should trustfully commit themselves to Christ for forgiveness of sins and for deliverance from the power of sin and evil. This is the gist of what Paul says in Rom. chaps. 9–11, where he is treating this very same subject of election. See especially Rom. 9 : 6, 11; 10 : 3, 4; 11 : 5. And this is everywhere the consistent teaching of Paul. So that it is a qualitative election rather than a personal election. But of course any who answer the description and who are of the described quality are included and of them it may be said that they were elected, as here Paul says of his readers and himself, *even as he chose us;* but even so, he adds *in him* to indicate *the reason* why he could say that they were elected.[1] **In love.** These words are to be taken with those that follow, thus: *having in love foreordained us*, thus making it God's love and not ours. This is much more in accord with the spirit of the whole passage, which is concerned with what God has done for us and is to us rather than what we are or have done. The word translated *good pleasure* in verse 5 does not denote benevolence or love, but simply the free self-determination of God's will.

[1] As to the absoluteness of election it is worth while to note that Paul in Rom. 8 : 29 makes God's foreknowledge antecedent to foreordination. And in 1 Pt. 1 : 2 (an epistle which has many affinities and coincidences both with Romans and Ephesians) "the election has its ground and norm in the foreknowledge of the Father," as Dr. Salmond says. He says again, "It is also to be noticed that in both Romans (8 : 29) and in 1 Peter (1 : 2) it is the foreknowledge and not the foreordination that is represented as antecedent to the election or as forming its ground." See Salmond on Ephesians in *Expositor's Greek Testament*, vol. iii, pp. 249–251.

6. to the good pleasure of his will, °to the praise of the glory of his grace, °[1] which he freely bestowed on us

[1] Or, *wherewith he endued us*

5. **Having foreordained us.** This is practically equivalent to: "And he foreordained us unto adoption as sons." Strictly construed, it is this: he chose us in him, at the same time foreordaining us unto adoption as sons. It states the significance of God's act toward us from another point of view. For those who are holy are God's sons and those who are God's sons are holy. Holiness is sonship. Others take *having foreordained* as temporally antecedent to *he chose us*, thus: Having foreordained us unto adoption as sons, he chose us that we should be holy, etc. "God elected us in Christ to be perfect saints, for he predestined us through Christ to be his sons" (Findlay). This is grammatically correct, but if foreordination to sonship is the primary thing and election the subsequent and subordinate thing, why should Paul have put election in the chief place in his sentence and foreordination in the subordinate construction and place? However, what's the difference? **Unto adoption as sons.** This is a favorite conception of Paul. It bulks large in his view of the state of those who are saved, Rom. 8 : 15; Gal. 4 : 5, 6. He does not speak of the new birth or of being born again, which is John's favorite figure, but of a new *creation* and a new *creature;* his view of sonship is that it is subsequent to re-creation and one of adoption. **Through Jesus Christ.** Our predestined relation to God as sons was to be realized through the mediation of Jesus Christ and not otherwise. So that election is in him and adoption is through him. **According to the good pleasure of his will.** The word translated good pleasure does not here mean benevolence; that was expressed by a much stronger word in verse 4, namely, *in love.* It is here the free self-determination of his will, his own absolute sovereign good pleasure and counsel, unmoved by any cause or consideration outside of himself. It occurs with the same meaning in Christ's words in Matt. 11 : 26: "Even so, Father, for such was thy good pleasure," that is, it was thy good pleasure to reveal the truth to babes and to conceal it from "philosophers." These words refer to all that he has said in verses 3, 4, and 5. God blessed, God chose, God foreordained, in accordance with the determination of his own will. And what do these words express? Merely the absolute independence and sovereignty of God in these acts of his. There is a faint suggestion here of what Paul says about the sovereignty of God in Rom. 9 : 14–21. What is the object of Paul in writing these strong words about the absolute and independent sovereignty of God and his acts of election and predestination of his people in the depths of eternity before the universe was? It was to show

7. °in the Beloved: °in whom °we have our redemption °through his blood, °the forgiveness of our trespasses,

that the thought of man and man's salvation by grace was absolutely primary in the mind of God, anterior and superior to the universe itself. Paul has already said in Colossians that the universe itself was grounded in Christ with a view to the new universe that was to be reconstructed and reconditioned in Christ. Indeed, this daring and startling thought is boldly broached in this epistle and in this very paragraph of it, see verse 10. The design of Paul was to dignify and glorify the grace of God which created the universe for and grounded it upon the purpose of man's redemption and salvation through Christ. Before Paul became a Christian the same thought substantially was expressed by Christ himself, "Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom *prepared for you from the foundation* of the world" (Mt. 25 : 34). Incidentally, and subordinately, these thrilling revelations of God's precreational plan of man's salvation and his precreational acts of election and adoption would give to his readers an inspiring, uplifting sense of their worth and dignity and of their security and welfare for the eternal future.

6. **To the praise of the glory of his grace.** See above on verse 5. As there said, the supreme end to which all that God wills, provides, and does in Christ for the redemption of men is the manifestation and recognition of the glory, the splendor, of his grace — that men and any and all intelligent beings in the universe may come to know the real nature and character of God, and how glorious his grace is. "The glorifying of the divine love (which, as it refers to sinful beings, is here called grace) is the divinely conceived ultimate aim" of the plan of redemption. **Which he freely bestowed on us.** The words in the original have a force and beauty which cannot be reproduced in English. It is something like this: his favor with which he graciously favored us. Does the verb *bestowed* refer to God's gracious provision of redemption for men, or to his making his grace effective in the actual inward experience of believers? When and in what sense does Paul mean that God bestowed his grace on them? It seems in their actual experience. For he has already brought out the other thought, substantially, in what precedes; and in what immediately follows he does describe their actual experience of forgiveness, pardon. **In the Beloved.** By virtue of our union with him who is the Beloved. This describes Jesus absolutely as the Beloved One of God. In Col. 1 : 13 he is called "the son of his love." Cf. Mt. 3 : 17; 17 : 5. This may be a messianic title. See detached note in Robinson on Ephesians.

7. **In whom.** Here it is again, *in Christ.* Everything is in Christ. **We have our redemption.** The word in Paul's epistles "denotes the

8. °according to the riches of his grace, °[1] which he made
9. to abound toward us in all wisdom and prudence, °having made known unto us the mystery of his will,

[1] Or, *wherewith he abounded*

deliverance accomplished, at the cost of Christ's death, from the penalty of sin." **Through his blood.** A more specific definition of the meaning in this connection of *in whom*. **The forgiveness of our trespasses.** This is in apposition with our redemption, defining what that consists in as realized in our experience and reported in our consciousness. **According to the riches of his grace.** What God provided and did *for* us in eternity before the creation of the universe is referred to as showing the *glory* of his grace, what he does *in* us in the conscious forgiveness of sins as showing the *riches* of his grace. And "as grace served to wind up one section of this great passage concerning what God provided for us from eternity, and to begin another in verse 6, so it serves here to connect and continue what God has done in us as a matter of experience, namely, what God has done in us in the consciousness of forgiveness and the inner enlightenment in the form of wisdom and prudence." How rich is his grace! Compare the hymn of John Newton:

> "Amazing grace! How sweet the sound!
> That saved a wretch like me."

8. **Which he made to abound toward us in all wisdom and prudence.** Here Paul takes up the revelatory aspect of grace, and he is so inspired and fired that he goes on using words of great import. With St. Paul the word "wisdom" belongs specially to the region of the secret (or mystery) of God and its revelation, while prudence is that practical understanding which relates to the practical affairs of life. In the letters of this period and group Paul lays great stress on wisdom, though in writing to the Corinthians at an earlier period he rebuked their devotion to what they called wisdom, by which he meant an intellectual subtlety akin to the spirit of Greek philosophy. He refused to gratify their desire for this sort of thing and would not impart to them in their carnal state of ambition and strife his own wisdom in the deeper things of God. However, he declared to them most positively that he *had* a wisdom, though one that belonged to mature men and not to babes (1 Cor. 2 : 1–7). And this is the wisdom (or philosophy of the universe, if you please to call it so) which we have in this transcendent epistle and in its twin epistle, that to the Colossians. Compare Robinson on Ephesians, *in loc.*

9. **Having made known unto us the mystery of his will** = in that he made known to us the hitherto unrevealed secret of his will, his hitherto

°according to his good pleasure °which he purposed in
10. him °unto a dispensation of the fulness of the [1] times,
°to sum up all things in Christ, °the things [2] in the

[1] Gr. *seasons.* [2] Gr. *upon.*

unrevealed will and purpose. Verses 9 and 10 are explanatory of the statement of verse 8. **According to his good pleasure** = in pursuance of his free self-determination (cf. verse 5). **Which he purposed in him.** This relative clause is inserted to serve as a means of attaching the following words, namely:

10. **Unto a dispensation of the fulness of the times.** "With a view to a dispensation belonging to the fulness of the times." That is, the purpose and plan of God looked to a dispensation or arrangement or order which was to be ushered in by him when the times were ripe for it. Compare Gal. 4 : 3, 4, "But when the fulness of the time came, God sent forth his son," etc. A preparatory period and process were necessary until the time should come when all things should be ripe and ready for the revelation of his secret, *i.e.*, hitherto unrevealed, plan, namely, the dispensation or economy of the divine saving grace, which was to be put into execution by Christ — in other words, the gospel plan of salvation. Somehow there is a sort of suggestion here that the fulness of the times included the production of a man with a full capacity, spiritual, intellectual, temperamental, to grasp the full scope and meaning of the new revolutionary revelation and dispensation, and the qualities of courage and endurance which would enable him to establish it in the earth before his death. Did God have to wait for Paul? At any rate there has never been but one Paul; and what would Christianity have been without this one? **To sum up all things in Christ.** A great and unexplorable saying! Perhaps as good a paraphrase as has been made of it is the following: To bring together again for himself all things and beings hitherto disunited by sin into one combined state of fellowship and unity in him who is the universal bond, Christ. This is the consummation that swims into view in this great epistle, which is the crowning revelation of the New Testament. It contemplates nothing less than the rehabilitation of the universe in Jesus Christ and the reconstitution of the universe on a Christian basis. This process of cosmic reunification has already had its beginning in the unification of the two separated and irreconcilable portions of mankind, the Jews and the Gentiles, in Christ Jesus, as Paul sets forth in this epistle: "That he might reconcile them both in one body unto God" (2 : 16); "For through him (Christ) we both have our access in one Spirit unto the Father" (2 : 18). And this idea and ideal of unity is more fully set forth in the great classic on Christian

11. heavens, and the things upon the earth; °in him, *I say*,
°in whom also we were made a heritage, °having been
foreordained °according to the purpose °of him who
12. worketh all things after the counsel of his will; °to the
end that we should be unto the praise of his glory, °we

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unity in chap. 4 : 3–16, which is too long to be quoted in full here, but which ought to be read in connection with this great saying of Paul. **The things in the heavens, and the things upon the earth.** That is, the sum total of created objects, whether things or beings, wherever found. See Col. 1 : 20 and the note thereon, and compare the suggestive sayings of Acts 3 : 21, and especially Rom. 8 : 20–22.

11. **In him, I say.** A repetition both for emphasis and to serve as a means of transition to, and connection with, what follows. **In whom also we were made a heritage.** In whom, as the causal ground, we have also, or actually, been made partakers of the inheritance; for he is telling what God has done for us rather than what we have been made to God. And the Greek word has this meaning, as well as the one given in the text. **Having been foreordained.** That is, to this participation in the inheritance. **According to the purpose.** Our forcordination was in accordance with and in pursuance of the purpose of God and not an accidental thing, or due to or dependent on ourselves. **Of him who worketh all things after the counsel of his will.** This seems to be added to express the absolute sovereignty, and so the absolute efficiency and sufficiency, of God, on whom our salvation depends and in whose hands it is.

12. **To the end that we should be unto the praise of his glory.** These words are to be taken in connection with the words *having been foreordained* in verse 11. The similar phrase in verse 5 is so construed there. They express the ultimate end which God had in view in foreordaining us to be made partakers of the inheritance. **We who had before hoped in Christ.** These words are taken by some of the best commentators to refer to the Jews. They do no such thing. There is no conceivable reason for drawing here the distinction between Jews and Gentiles or for speaking here of the Jews as distinguished from the Gentiles. Besides, if Paul had intended to refer to the Jews here in a distinctive way, he certainly could have made it plain, as he does in chap. 2 : 11–22. This is certainly a very vague and hazy way of indicating the Jews. The language, in agreement with the whole context, refers to Christians in general. The "we," as in the preceding verse, simply means all Christian believers; and the whole sentence is to be thus interpreted: To the end that we should be to the praise of his glory, we, who *before* the full manifesta-

13. who [1] had before hoped in Christ: °in whom ye also,
°having heard the word of the truth, the gospel of your
salvation, — in whom, having also believed, °ye were
14. sealed with the Holy Spirit °of promise, °which is an
earnest of our inheritance, °unto the redemption of
God's own possession, unto the praise of his glory.

[1] Or, *have*

tion of that glory (at the parousia) have reposed our hope in Christ. (The reading *have* in the margin probably has this meaning.) And this interpretation is in accordance with the fact that the word *hope* is generally used by Paul as referring to the final consummation of our salvation and final glorification.

13. **In whom ye also.** This is, by those commentators mentioned above, supposed to mean: Ye Gentile believers as well as the Jews. Not so. It simply means, You, to whom I am writing, as well as all other Christian believers. Exactly the same thing occurs in Eph. 2 : 22, and in Rom. 1 : 6; and practically the same thing in Col. 1 : 21 and 2 : 13. The words declare of the readers in particular what was true of Christians in general, and is not for the purpose of distinguishing them as Gentiles from Jews. **Having heard the word of the truth.** The construction of this sentence is broken. Probably Paul had it in mind to say, "In whom ye also having heard the word of the truth, believed and were sealed," etc. But instead of this, he repeats the relative with a second participle, namely, having also believed, etc., **Ye were sealed with the Holy Spirit.** That is, by the impartation of the Holy Spirit, which was to them and in them a matter of experience, as in Rom. 5 : 5. The sealing was the assurance of salvation attested to their own consciousness by the Holy Spirit, as in Rom. 8 : 16. The Spirit himself beareth witness with our spirit that we are children of God. **Of promise.** The Holy Spirit was the object of the promise of God.

14. **Which is an earnest of our inheritance.** This statement is of the nature of a parenthesis, coming between a verb (ye were sealed) and the temporal prepositional adjunct which modifies it (unto or until the consummation of redemption). In receiving the Spirit (as they had done, else all this would have absolutely no meaning for them) they had a guarantee, as earnest money is a guarantee of future payment, that they should become actual possessors of the final inheritance, of future salvation. **Unto the redemption.** These words are to be construed with *ye were sealed*, and they are temporal, as is shown by the words in 4 : 30, "In whom (the Holy Spirit) ye were sealed unto *the*

III. Thanksgiving for what they Were and Prayer for what he wanted them to Be, 1 : 15–23

15. °For this cause °I also, °having heard of °the faith in the Lord Jesus which is [1] among you, °and [2] which *ye*

[1] Or, *in* [2] Many ancient authorities insert *the love.*

day of redemption." These words then will influence the interpretation of the meaning of sealing. God's gift of the Holy Spirit to them is a proof that they are his, it is his assurance to them of the reality of the process that has made them his, it is his proprietary stamp; and it is thus implicitly a guarantee that he will keep them unto the day of final redemption. By the impartation of his Spirit, accomplishing their inward moral and spiritual transformation and giving them the consciousness of sonship, their final salvation is pledged and assured so far as God is concerned. As has been quaintly said, "By putting heaven in us he guarantees that he will some day put us in heaven." There is a striking parallel to this and commentary on this in Phil. 1 : 6: "He which began a good work in you will perfect it until the day of Jesus Christ." But this does not exclude the possibility of a believer's separating *himself* from God and losing salvation. Compare 1 Cor. 9 : 27. **Unto the redemption of God's own possession.** The word *God's* is not in the original. The original is simply, *unto the redemption of the possession*, and this, according to the run of the context, probably means sealed unto redemption, which will give actual possession (Abbott).

15. "Only after he has freed his heart by the preceding outburst does he reach what in other epistles he begins with," namely, thanksgiving on behalf of his readers. **For this cause.** Refers to verses 13 and 14, because you also are included among the saints, because you have heard and believed the gospel and have received the seal of God in the experiences he has wrought in you. **I also.** I want you to know and to feel that, as you give thanks and pray for yourselves and for each other, I, Paul, also do the same. **Having heard of the faith.** This suggests, though it does not prove, that Paul had never seen them; for he could receive news of their continuing or growing in faith, as in the case of Philemon, whom he did know, Philem. 5, 19. **The faith which is among you.** This is practically the same as *your faith*, though some think it means that true faith existed among them, though not all of them had it (Alford). **And which ye shew toward all the saints.** The words *ye shew* are not in the Greek text here at all; but according to the best text, which omits the words *the love*, some such words need to be supplied.

16. *shew* toward all the saints, °cease not to give thanks
17. for you, °making mention *of you* in my prayers; °that
the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, °the Father of glory,
°may give unto you °a spirit of wisdom and revelation
18. °in the knowledge of him; °having the eyes of your

16. **Cease not to give thanks for you.** This does not mean that he spent all his time in giving thanks for them, nor is it "an affectionate hyperbole," as Bishop Ellicott calls it; it means that he did not fail to give thanks for them from time to time. **Making mention of you in my prayers.** The words *of you* are not in the original and there is no need for supplying them. It was not of his readers that he means to say he made mention, but of the thing that he most wished for them. At the time of my prayers I make it a matter of special mention, namely:

17. **That the God of our Lord Jesus Christ.** Christ himself, in the consciousness of his relation of subordination to and dependence on God the Father, calls him "my God," Mt. 27 : 46; Jn. 20 : 17. Or the words may here mean, the God whom our Lord Jesus Christ revealed. **The Father of glory.** The Father to whom the glory *par excellence* belonged. Compare such phrases as "the Father of mercies." To translate the words here *the glorious Father* would weaken the thought. These rather singular designations are chosen with special reference to the contents of the prayer which follows: He who is the God of Christ and your Father, to whom glory belongs (power and might and majesty), may surely be expected to do that which the cause of Christ requires, which his children need, and which will serve to show his power and manifest his glory. **May give unto you.** This is what Paul said he made special mention of. **A spirit of wisdom and revelation.** Better, the spirit of wisdom, etc., for it is the Holy Spirit that is meant, as is usual in the New Testament when spirit is spoken of as given. "It is a teaching Spirit rather than a teachable spirit." He is called the spirit of wisdom and of revelation because he gives wisdom and revelations, as in Rom. 8 : 2 he is called the spirit of life because he gives life. In 1 Cor. 2 : 10 Paul declares that the secrets of God are *revealed* through his Spirit. And without revelation they cannot be known; without it, indeed, these secrets, even when *declared* to men in their unregenerate state, are incredible or they seem foolish (1 Cor. 2 : 14). **In the knowledge of him.** It is not in the sphere of the knowledge of things in general that Paul asks for them the spirit of wisdom and revelation, but of the knowledge, full, true, and thorough knowledge, of God.

18. **Having the eyes of your heart enlightened.** This is not a mere intellectual enlightenment, but is of the heart, which is conceived as

heart enlightened, °that ye may know °what is the hope
of his calling, °what the riches of the glory of his in-
19. heritance °in the saints, °and what the exceeding great-

the seat of the feelings and the will. It is the will especially that determines character and hence has most to do with the capacity of moral perception, discernment, as in Jn. 7 : 17. **That ye may know.** These words express the object, either of the giving of the spirit of wisdom and revelation, thus: in order that ye, being enlightened as to the eyes of your heart, may know; or of the enlightening of the eyes of the heart, thus: the eyes of your heart being enlightened that ye may know, etc. The grammatical construction of the first is easier. At any rate it is necessary for them to have a divine illumination in order that they may have effective and adequate comprehension of the three things that follow, namely, the hope of God's calling, the object of that hope, the greatness of the power that is pledged for its realization. **What is the hope of his calling.** Note that it is God's calling. That calling involves a hope, and we should know the full significance and power of a hope that is involved in being called of God. This we cannot realize in its full scope and meaning without the quickening and illumination of the divine Spirit, whose very function it is to give wisdom and make revelations to believers. The hope is not here put for the thing hoped for, as in Col. 1 : 5. The thing hoped for is the subject of the next clause, as follows: **What the riches of the glory of his inheritance.** As it was God's calling, so it is his inheritance or heritage. "The Lord's portion is his people, . . . the lot of his inheritance." Paul wished and longed and prayed that his readers might be enabled, empowered, to understand, not how glorious is the riches, but how rich would be the glory which God would take pride in bestowing upon the people whom he had chosen as his own portion and heritage. This they could not do unless he gave and they received his Spirit of wisdom and revelation. Evidently, Paul himself understood this, and hence his eagerness that his readers might have the same inspiration. **In the saints.** That is, God's heritage consists in the saints, for "the Lord's portion is his people," even as one of them had said, "The Lord is my portion." The fact that Christians are not fired with a Pauline enthusiasm and Christendom is not transfigured, is proof that they do *not* know the riches of the glory of being God's heritage.

19. **And what the exceeding greatness of his power.** After the reference to the object of the great hope comes the description in detail of that power by means of which the hope is to be realized, namely, the exceeding great power of God as shown, in the first place, in the resurrection of Christ from the dead and his exaltation and

ness of his power °to us-ward who believe, °according
20. to that working of the strength of his might °which
he wrought in Christ, °when he raised him from the
dead, °and made him to sit at his right hand °in the
21. heavenly *places*, °far above all rule, and authority,
and power, and dominion, °and every name that is

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glorification at the right hand of God. **To us-ward who believe.** That is, in its relation and application to us believers. Now Paul is here speaking, not primarily of the power of God as already manifesting itself in the experience of believers in this life, but of that power as manifesting itself or to be manifested in the case of believers at the parousia, when the mighty working of that power which was displayed in Christ's resurrection and exaltation will, in virtue of their fellowship with Christ, bring about the fulfilment of their hope, namely, the realization of the wealth of glory which belongs to the saints as the chosen and beloved heritage of God (Rom. 8 : 17). But note carefully the comment on chap. 2 : 1, below. **According to that working of the strength of his might.** This is adduced as the means of measuring or estimating the greatness of the power of God pledged for the fulfilment of the hope of believers, and so as the ground of "knowing" it ("that ye may know"). The accumulation of words for power in this passage illustrates how Paul had to struggle with language in order to give expression to the surging thoughts within him.

20. **Which he wrought in Christ** = which he effectively exercised in the case of Christ. **When he raised him from the dead.** Better, in that he raised him from the dead, or in the act of raising him from the dead. **And made him to sit at his right hand.** This exaltation of Christ is cited as a distinct instance and proof of what the energetic working of the power of God has done, can do. **In the heavenly places.** Here apparently a specification of place. Compare Mt. 6 : 9; 24 : 30; 25 : 31; Acts 7 : 55; Phil. 3 : 20.

21. **Far above all rule, and authority, and power, and dominion.** Whether Paul himself believed in or held to any graduated order of angelic beings such as is found in the Jewish literature of his day, or whether his lists of such orders (as here and Rom. 8 : 38; Col. 1 : 16; Eph. 3 : 10) are quotations of the opinions of others or of current theories, we cannot definitely say. At any rate, he probably means something like this: "Whatever beings or powers or dignities there may be, by whatever names they may be called, Christ is exalted far above them all." **And every name that is named.** As if he would say, "and whatever other orders than those I have named or by whatever

named, °not only in this [1] world, but also in that which
22. is to come: °and he put all things in subjection under
his feet, °and gave him to be head over all things to the
23. church, °which is his body, the fulness of him that filleth
all in all.

[1] Or, *age*

name they may be called, Christ is sovereign over them too." There seems to be a suggestion here that they were after all *nothing but names*. **Not only in this world** (or age), **but also in that which is to come.** Paul is determined to exhaust the universe, future as well as present, for his words embrace all beings that now exist and all that may exist in any possible future. Whatever name they may bear, whatever world or age they may belong to, Christ is Lord of all. This recalls his sweeping language in Col. 1 : 16, 17.

22. **And he put all things in subjection under his feet.** He has already set forth most exhaustively the exaltation of Christ above all things, but he does not leave the subjection of all things to Christ to be inferred; he distinctly states it. All that has been created God has subjected to the will and rule of Christ. Nor is this conception peculiar to Paul. Already Christ himself has said in so many words: "All authority hath been given unto me in heaven and on earth," Mt. 28 : 18. **And gave him to be head over all things to the church.** Strictly it is: And him, head over all things, as being head over all things, God gave to the church (of course, to be its head also). The word *him* stands at the beginning of the sentence and has the primary emphasis, thus: Him, the one exalted and ruling over all in heaven and on earth, him God gave to the church, *i.e.*, God in giving Christ to the church gave him as the one who is Head over all things. It is implied, of course, that God gave him who is Head over all things, to the church to be its Head also — a view which is confirmed by the following clause, "which is his body."

23. **Which is his body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all.** This has been called "the most remarkable expression in the whole epistle." The church is here called, not only the body of Christ, but the fulness, that is, the completion of Christ. It is that without which Christ is not complete, as the head is not complete without the body. The Apostle looks upon Christ as in a sense wanting completeness and destined to find completeness in the church. In the sense in which the body is the completion of the head, the church is the completion of Christ. That is, the church is that through which Christ lives and works here on earth. This is a matter of fact, and it suits the conception of the church as Christ's body. And as the church

IV. The Supernatural Work which God had wrought in them; and This that they might work for Him — and All through His Grace, 2 : 1–10

2. °And you *did he quicken*, °when ye were dead through
2. your trespasses and sins, °wherein aforetime ye walked
°according to the [1] course of this world, °according to

[1] Gr. *age*

grows toward completion, Christ grows toward completion. This interpretation illuminates and is illuminated by an almost equally remarkable passage in Colossians (1 : 24), where Paul says, "I am filling up on my part that which is lacking of the afflictions of Christ in my flesh for his body's sake, which is the church."

1. **And you did he quicken.** The greatness of God's power toward believers has already been illustrated and measured by what he wrought in raising Christ from the dead and exalting him to God's right hand, supreme over all authority and rule. In the next place, Paul tells his readers that they have had experience of that power at work in themselves. Through it they also had been raised from the dead. So that the description of the greatness of God's power in chap. 1, verses 19, 20, 21, 22, is not to be understood as applying *exclusively* to the realization of their hope at the time of the parousia. It applies to the present inward experience of believers here in this life also. For Paul here describes the spiritual quickening and resurrection to new life of his readers as an actual experience which they had already realized. **When ye were dead.** That is, morally and spiritually dead; and this state of deadness to spiritual things was brought about by means of their sins. Similarly, Paul speaks of his own experience of sin causing his death, in a statement of singular significance in Rom. 7 : 9, 10.

2. **Wherein aforetime ye walked.** This sentence affords a good example of the way in which Paul "goes off at a word." The word is "sins." It leads him away into a digression occupying the whole of verses 2 and 3. But according to his custom he returns to the original thought in verse 4 and completes it. In this digression he pauses to explain how his readers had gotten into a state of deadness to moral and spiritual truth and reality. It was because they had lived in habitual practice of sin. This was what had killed them. **According to the course of this world.** Literally, *according to the age of this*

the prince of the power of the air, °of the spirit that now
3. worketh in the sons of disobedience; °among whom
°we also all °once lived °in the lusts of our flesh, °doing
the desires of the flesh °and of the [1] mind, °and were by

[1] Gr. *thoughts.*

world, a pleonasm perhaps for emphasis. According to "the spirit of the age" is good, but inadequate. The word *age* here evidently has an ethical sense. The combination might be paraphrased, "according to the low moral quality and drift of this world." **According to the prince of the power of the air.** According to some commentators Paul means to define literally the locality where the powers of evil operate — "the superterrestrial but subcelestial region which seems to be the haunt of evil spirits." Others think he is using the common parlance of his day which would be familiar to his readers. The sense is that his readers in their prechristian, unenlightened condition were under the power and lived according to the will of the chief of all the powers of evil. This imparts a shade of deeper darkness to his description of the former state of these now Christian believers. **Of the spirit that now worketh in the sons of disobedience.** The same "prince" is in some sense the ruler of the spirit of the world (1 Cor. 2 : 12), the spiritual influence which "energizes" in bad men, here with Hebrew picturesqueness called "the *sons* of disobedience." It is very significant that in this great epistle, where Paul ascends to the highest heights and unveils the highest glories of holiness and purity, he also descends deepest into mystery of iniquity and unveils its undiscovered sources. Compare the passages, 4 : 17–19; 5 : 7, 11–12; 6 : 12, all of which are similar in tone and color to that which we are considering.

3. **Among whom.** That is, among the sons of disobedience of whom we were part. Here again Paul "goes off at a word" into another digression, making a digression within a digression. **We also all.** Here he changes to the first person and adds the word *all* so as to make the description include all classes and all men. **Once lived.** Formerly had our life and conduct. **In the lusts of our flesh.** These are two very bad words. The flesh is human nature apart from God and under the dominion of sin; the lusts are the lower animal passions that belong to and dominate this human nature. **Doing the desires of the flesh.** They put into acts the desires of their fleshly nature. **And of the mind.** Rather, *of the thoughts.* This is another bad word, at least it is found in low, bad company in the New Testament. Most of us do not need to have anybody tell us what bad thoughts are. We know, alas! too well. **And were by nature children of wrath.**

4. nature children of wrath, °even as the rest: — °but God,
°being rich in mercy, °for his great love °wherewith
5. he loved us, °even when we were dead through our
trespasses, °quickened us °together [1] with Christ

[1] Some ancient authorities read *in Christ.*

This looks at first as if Paul meant that they were, that we were, by birth and from birth, under the wrath of God; that infants and innocent little children, such as Jesus loved and commended, are the objects of God's anger. But Paul does not mean this or say this. He would have contradicted what he had already said in 1 Cor. 7 : 14. The clause preceding this tells what they did, this clause tells what they had thereby *become.* The meaning is that they all, Jews and Gentiles, were by the spontaneous impulses and desires of their nature, inclined to wrong-doing, to the doing of those things which would put them under the wrath of God; and as, following the impulses of their nature, they had all actually done those things, had lived in the habitual practice of them, it could be said with truth that they were in a state of exposure to the wrath of God as a result of following the desires and passions of their nature; that is, they had come to be by their very nature the objects of God's wrath. **Even as the rest.** That is, we who are now the happy children of God, free from the dominion of the lusts of the flesh, we were formerly in the condition I have just described, just as all the rest of the unregenerate world were and still are.

4. **But God.** This introduces the resumption of that sentence which was begun in verse 1 and then interrupted by the digressions of verses 2 and 3. **Being rich in mercy.** If there is wrath, there is mercy also, rich mercy. **For his great love.** That is, because of his great love, in order to satisfy it. If there is wrath, there is love, great love. But is it possible for God to love those with whom he is angry or to be angry with those whom he loves? Certainly. Parents are sometimes angry, very angry, with the children whom they love, perhaps sometimes even because they love them. **Wherewith he loved us.** This is probably not so much for emphasis, as to make a connecting link with the following words, and is about equivalent to this: the great love which he had for us *even when,* etc.

5. **Even when we were dead.** An emphatic repetition of the similar clause in verse 1 and presenting the extreme of the case. **Quickened us.** It is a pity that the timid conservatism of the revisers would not let them abandon this archaism for a fresh and faithful translation of the vivid and picturesque Greek word, *he made us alive.* Meanwhile, it should not be forgotten that this act of God is adduced here as a

6. (°by grace have ye been saved), and raised us up with
him, and made us to sit with him in the heavenly *places*,
7. in Christ Jesus: °that in the ages to come °he might
shew the exceeding riches of his grace °in kindness
8. toward us in Christ Jesus: °for by grace have ye been
saved °through faith; °and that not of yourselves: *it*

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manifestation and an example of "the exceeding greatness of the power of God to us-ward who believe," as the resurrection and exaltation of Jesus was adduced for the same purpose. **Together with Christ.** Paul has already said (in 1 : 23) that the church is Christ's body, and by virtue of our union with him as of members with the head, we share in the resurrection and exaltation of Christ. We have already had the experience of resurrection into a new spiritual life, and the sequel, though future, is secure, as good as realized already. Cf. Rom. 6 : 4–8. **By grace have ye been saved.** If they were quickened when they were dead, then it could not have been of themselves, for dead people can do nothing; it must have been by God's free grace.

7. **That in the ages to come.** Literally, the ages that are coming on — the successively arriving and passing ages from that time for evermore, as in 3 : 21. **He might shew the exceeding riches of his grace.** Practically the same thought as in 1 : 6, "to the praise of the glory of his grace." But it comes in again here — and everywhere; for Paul cannot get away from the grace of God. **In kindness toward us in Christ Jesus.** Defining how the grace expressed itself, his grace, which expressed itself in the gracious kindness with which he dealt with us. Grace is the source of the kindness and Christ Jesus is the great expression of the grace.

8. **For.** I am justified in speaking thus of the riches of his grace, for it is by this grace that you have been saved and are now in a state of salvation. **Through faith.** And if it was by grace on God's part, it was, as it had to be, by faith, for grace and faith are naturally correlative and mutually implicative, as in Rom. 4 : 16. **And that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God.** To refer the emphatic phrase "and that" to the preceding statement, that it was by grace they had been saved through faith, is untenable, because it is, in that case, practically an unnecessary repetition, a weak redundancy. If they were saved by grace, of course it was the gift of God; that is what grace means. Why should it be said over again and the redundant word be introduced with a very emphatic phrase? But make *and that* refer to faith, and there is an advance in the thought and propriety in the emphasis, as well as truth in the statement. Besides, it

9. *is* the gift of God: °not of works, that no man should
10. glory. °For we are his workmanship, °created in Christ Jesus °for good works, °which God afore prepared that we should walk in them.

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is Pauline. In Phil. 1 : 29 Paul says "To you it *hath been granted* not only *to believe on him*," etc. It will not be out of place to say that this is the view of that great synergistic Arminian, John Wesley, epigrammatically and emphatically expressed in his sermon on this very verse. So also Chrysostom, Theodoret, Jerome, Erasmus, Beza, Bengel, etc. The Greek allows this: see Abbott, Salmond and Robinson, *in loc.*

9. **Not of works.** That is, salvation through faith does not belong to the category of works, which give a ground for glorying; so that, as it is by faith, no one may glory. "That the glory of salvation belongs wholly to God and has been so planned and effected as to take from man all ground of boasting, is enforced by Paul again and again with anxious concern and great plainness of expression."

10. **For we are his workmanship.** This is the reason why there is no ground for glorying. What we are as Christians God himself has made us. **Created in Christ Jesus.** When Paul said we are God's work, he was not speaking of the first creation, as, for example, the Psalmist meant, when he said "It is he that made us and not we ourselves"; he was speaking of the new creation. What true Christians are is the product of the creative energy and action of God. Nothing less than a creative agency could produce such an effect. And this was done, not apart from Christ, but through the process of being brought into vital union with him so as to become sharers of his life as the branch shares the life of the vine. **For good works.** Good works are not left out, they are expressly provided for; but they come after and as the result of our being created anew in Christ. If they follow as the result of our salvation, they cannot be the condition or the means of our salvation. **Which God afore prepared.** It is as unintelligible as it is incorrect to say that God prepared good works. It is perfectly intelligible and in accordance with the truth to say that God made preparation for good works, and it is grammatically correct: We were created in Christ Jesus, then, for good works, for which God made previous preparation or provision, in order that we live our lives in the practice of them. We are God's work and we are God's workmen. Or the construction may be this: Good works for which God prepared us (understood) by creating us anew in Christ.

V. The Reconciliation and Reunion of the Two Sundered Portions of Humanity — Jews and Gentiles — Through the Cross, 2 : 11–22

11. °Wherefore remember, that aforetime °ye, the Gentiles in the flesh, °who are called Uncircumcision by that which is called Circumcision, in the flesh, made
12. by hands; °that ye were at that time °separate from Christ, °alienated from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of the promise, °having
13. no hope and °without God °in the world. °But now °in Christ Jesus °ye that once were far off °are made

11. **Wherefore remember.** One of the worst things that we can do is to forget. Paul will remind these Christians of Asia, who, only a little while ago, were sodden heathen, of the hole of the pit whence they were digged, that they might be more thankful, more humble, more careful, more diligent, more faithful. **Ye, the Gentiles in the flesh.** With respect to the mark in the flesh which distinguished them as Gentiles from Jews. **Who are called Uncircumcision.** Called in contempt Uncircumcision by the so-called Circumcision (that is, the Jews) in the flesh, a circumcision merely physical and made with hands.

12. **That ye were at that time.** In verse 11 Paul went off again at the word "Gentiles" into a digression running through the verse. Now he resumes with the word "that," which is repeated in Greek as in English. **Separate from Christ.** They were without Christ, apart from Christ, in the sense that they had never so much as heard of him, and so had nothing to do with him. **Alienated from the commonwealth of Israel.** Not only were you without Christ, you did not even have the advantages and privileges of Jews, with the different covenants that were made with them involving the promise of a Christ and so inspiring in them a hope. **Having no hope.** The Gentiles did not have even this hope. **Without God.** You were atheists — not exactly in the modern sense of being deniers of God — they did not even have a God to deny, as the moderns have. **In the world.** No hope, no God, in this dark, desolate world of sin and sorrow.

13. **But now.** But now! these words alone after the dark picture of their former condition would be pregnant with vivid suggestiveness. **In Christ Jesus.** Here, as everywhere, Christ, that is, Jesus

14. nigh °in the blood of Christ. °For he °is our peace,
°who made both one, °and brake down the middle wall
15. of partition, °having abolished °in his flesh °the enmity,
even the law of commandments °*contained* in ordinances;

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the Christ, is first, for Paul. It is impossible for Paul to forget and leave him out. These words *in Christ Jesus* are to be construed with *are made nigh*, below. **Ye that once were far off.** A summary restatement of the detailed description already given. **Are made nigh.** These words likewise are a compendious statement of their present condition, implying the opposite in every point and detail of their previous condition. **In the blood of Christ.** A more specific definition of the phrase *in Christ Jesus*. It was through his death that the Gentiles were admitted.

14. **For he.** Strong emphasis in the Greek = for it is he, in his own person. **Is our peace.** That is, he is the bond of reconciliation, reunion, peace, between Jew and Gentile. **Who made both one.** He has harmonized and unified Jew and Gentile. **And brake down the middle wall of partition.** That is, the wall which stood in the middle between Jew and Gentile and served as a partition, keeping them apart.

15. **Having abolished.** Rather, in that he did abolish. **In his flesh.** The parallel passage in Col. 1 : 22 shows that this means *by his crucifixion in the flesh.* **The enmity, even the law of commandments.** The law which the Jews had and in which they gloried was that which made the distinction between Jew and Gentile and so separated them, thus creating the enmity which existed between them. **Contained in ordinances.** This describes the form of the law (see Col. 2 : 14 and the note thereon). The law commanded; it commanded in the form of "decrees," rules, and regulations, prescribing and regulating all the minutest details of the everyday life. The observance of all these rules was what made the Jew so different from the Gentile; and the difference made the Jew look down with contempt and hatred on the Gentile as an alien and a dog; while it made the Gentile despise the Jew as a fanatic and a fool. So they were at enmity. When Paul was writing to the Colossians, he said nothing of the law as the partition that separated Jew and Gentile. He wrote of it as a system of prescriptions and ordinances which would hold them in the bondage of a barren legalism and a fruitless asceticism, if they allowed the false teachers there to impose it on them. But in his letter to the various churches of Asia his point of view is different. He writes from the point of view of the reconciliation of all men of all races, and the ideal unity of the race. This suggests another aspect and effect of the law of ordinances, which was, that as long as it was in force, it kept Jew and Gentile effectually and

°that he might create in himself of the twain one new
16. man, °*so* making peace; °and might reconcile them
both °in one body unto God °through the cross, °having
17. slain the enmity thereby: °and he came and [1] preached

[1] Gr. *preached good tidings of peace.*

hopelessly asunder. Hence the abolition of this law would have the effect of bringing the two together. The Jews were drawn away from the law and led to abandon the law and take refuge in Christ for salvation. The Gentiles were drawn away from their sins and sinfulness and their sense of condemnation to Christ for salvation. In Christ, then, they meet and are one.

This paragraph (2 : 11–22) is preparatory to the great passage on ideal unity in 4 : 1–16.

That he might create in himself of the twain one new man. This translation is obscure and misleading. It is: *that he might in himself create the two into one new man.* This states the purpose he had in view in abolishing the law of ordinances which had served as a barrier between Jew and Gentile. So Christ, having abolished the barrier, has *created* (note the word!) each of the two into a man that was neither Jew nor Gentile, but a new man. **So making peace.** It was by creating of the Jew a new man and of the Gentile (the same kind of) new man that he made peace between them, brought them into harmony and union.

16. **And might reconcile them both in one body unto God.** Not only was it the purpose and mission of Jesus Christ to reconcile Jew and Gentile to each other, but in the same act to reconcile them both together unto God. **In one body.** This is one of the great dominating ideas of this epistle. It is expanded and fully treated in the great passage on unity in chap. 4 : 3–16, where see notes. Compare also Col. 3 : 15; 1 Cor. 10 : 17. **Through the cross.** By his death, as has been said. But Paul dwells on it and goes over it with loving iteration. **Having slain the enmity thereby.** The Jew, despairing of justification and deliverance from sin through the law, turned from it to Christ, Rom. 7 and Gal. 3 : 24; the Gentile, convicted of his sins by the light of the revelations contained in the gospel and made sensible of the corruption of his nature and the darkness and hopelessness of his condition, turned to Christ. So that Jew and Gentile meet in Christ and, experiencing salvation through his reconciling death, are no longer two but one.

17. **And he came and preached peace.** He not only made peace by his death, he came and proclaimed the glad tidings of peace. This seems to imply that he came and preached it *after* his death. He

peace °to you that were far off, and peace to them that
18. were nigh: °for through him we both have our access
19. in one Spirit unto the Father. °So then °ye are no more strangers and sojourners, °but ye are fellow-citizens with the saints, °and of the household of God,
20. °being built upon the foundation °of the apostles and

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came in his own person after his resurrection, but in a truer and larger way he preached the glad tidings of reconciliation and peace in the person of the Holy Spirit, who inspired the Apostles and preachers of the apostolic age, especially Paul, to preach peace. **To you that were far off.** How it must have touched these Gentile Christians that the great Apostle put them first!

18. **For through him we both have our access in one Spirit unto the Father.** This is one of the most beautiful verses of the whole epistle. It takes in the whole of the Godhead and the whole race of human kind. It comes in here as a confirmation, from the facts of their own and his experience, of his previous statements concerning the reuniting of the race in and by Jesus Christ. Accordingly the emphasis is on the words *through him*. For it is through him, as we all well know by experience, that we both, Jew and Gentile, have conscious access to and communion with our common Father. The Bible contains no more striking expression of the reuniting of humanity and their union with God. To Paul the inclusion of the rest of mankind as fellow-heirs and on the same terms with the Jews, so that they all were equal sons of the one Father and brothers of each other, in one spirit of loving fellowship, — no more difference, no more distinction, no more division, — to Paul this was the revelation of the most precious secret of God, the crowning achievement of his grace.

19. **So then.** These words introduce the grand summing up that Paul makes from the foregoing statement of the case of Gentile believers — to conclude the matter, the situation is this: **ye are no more strangers,** foreigners, as some of the Gentiles were, **and sojourners,** as others of the Gentiles were, who had become proselytes to Judaism. **But ye are fellow-citizens with the saints.** The preceding negative statement is followed by this positive statement. They were full members of the new theocracy, the greater Israel. **And of the household of God.** Not only citizens of the commonwealth of the new Israel, but of the very family of God.

20. **Being built upon the foundation.** The preceding word "household" suggests to him the idea of a house, a building with its solid foundation, a favorite figure with Paul. **Of the apostles and prophets.** Not consisting of apostles and prophets, but the foundation laid by

prophets, °Christ Jesus himself being the chief corner
21. stone; °in whom °[1] each several building, °fitly framed
22. together, °groweth into a holy [2] temple °in the Lord; in

[1] Gr. *every building.* [2] Or, *sanctuary*

the apostles and prophets. The prophets here referred to were not those of the old dispensation, but those of the apostolic day, as is shown by what he says in 3 : 5 and 4 : 11. The distinction between these two classes of Christian workers lay in that the prophets were primarily inspired teachers, while the apostles, though probably, like Paul, having the gift of prophecy, could also testify from personal experience to having "seen the Lord" after his resurrection, and also had the power of conferring the gift of the Spirit and the authority to found and oversee churches. **Christ Jesus himself being the chief corner stone.** "Christ, the Messiah, who had been called by the old prophets the corner stone; Jesus the human manifestation of the Christ in time. He is part of the body which he brings into being, for he is its head; he is part of the house which he founds, for he is its corner stone (referring to Is. 28 : 16). And just because he will speak of Christ in the old prophet's terms as a corner stone, he cannot here speak of him as the whole foundation."

21. **In whom.** Here again is Paul's all-controlling thought that every part and phase of the scheme of redemption has its validity and value only in the fact that it has Christ as its ground or sphere. **Each several building.** Not the whole structure, but each of the several parts of an extensive pile of building so adjusted as to preserve unity of design and structure. The reference is to each separate local congregation or Christian community, as that at Colossæ, at Laodicea, at Hierapolis, at Ephesus. This conception of Paul thus interpreted is in keeping with the fact that this letter was a circular letter intended for, and sent to, each of several churches in Asia Minor. **Fitly framed together.** This is present participle and denotes a process going on. The idea is that of fitting and adjusting into one complete whole, as, for example, the different wings of the Capitol at Washington, constructed at different times, are fitly framed together so as to produce the harmonious *tout ensemble* of that imposing structure. **Groweth into a holy temple.** This must not be construed so as to mean that "each several building" grows into a separate temple, but that it increases in size and completeness so to as form together with the others a great whole. **In the Lord.** Why *in the Lord* instead of *in Christ?* "Where the apostle describes the transcendental relation of believers to Christ as the ground of their acceptance with God, he uses the expression 'in Christ'; whereas, when he is speaking of the issues

whom °ye also °are builded together °[1] for a habitation of God °in the Spirit.

VI. Paul's Unique and God-ordered Relation to and Part in the Reunion of Disunited Humanity in Christ, 3 : 1–13

3. °For this cause °I Paul, °the prisoner of Christ
2. Jesus °in behalf of you Gentiles, — °if so be that

[1] Gr. *into.*

of that relation as manifested in life and conduct in this world, he uses the phrase 'in the Lord.'"

22. **Ye also.** That is, the congregation to whom this letter was being read. **Are builded together.** As one of the several buildings (verse 21) that are growing together into the temple, you are being builded together **for a habitation of God.** Rather, as the margin has, *into* a habitation of God. This is the climax of the ascensive description of the dignity to which these Gentiles had been elevated by becoming believers in Christ. **In the Spirit.** "It is by virtue of your being in the Spirit as the element of your life that ye are being builded together for a habitation of God."

1. **For this cause.** Because of the opening of the way in Christ Jesus for the inclusion of the whole Gentile world, as shown in the preceding section, 2 : 11–22, he is now led to pray for them, the loftiest and most comprehensive prayer, with one exception, in the Bible or out of it. **I Paul.** This form of speech is not used to emphasize his authority as an apostle. There is nothing in the whole epistle to indicate that this was necessary. It was rather to make his readers sensible of the personal interest that he whom they knew as the great Apostle of the Gentiles felt in them. Up to this point he has been unwontedly, almost strangely, impersonal. He has said practically nothing of himself. One reason for this is that he was writing for people whom for the most part he had never seen and did not personally know. Another is that he is writing, not about matters of a personal nature, but in exposition of the greater plan of God which through the ages runs. "It is only when he reaches a resting place in his thought that he hears, as it were, the clink of his chain and then remembers where he is and why he is there." **The prisoner of Christ Jesus.** As if Paul would say, it is not the Roman authority that holds me in captivity and in prison, it is in reality Jesus Christ, but for whom I should be free, as other men are. **In behalf of you Gentiles.** It was

ye have heard °of the [1] dispensation of that grace of
3. God which was given me °to you-ward; °how that by

[1] Or, *stewardship*

because of his preaching salvation to the Gentiles that he was arrested and at last landed in prison at Rome, Acts 22 : 22; 26 : 21–23.

2. **If so be that ye have heard.** Here Paul "goes off at a word" again, the word "Gentiles," into another one of those digressions which are so common in his epistles. The thought of his being a prisoner in behalf of the Gentiles leads him aside to give a fuller statement to them of his relation to the gospel dispensation and how it came about. This he does in verses 2–13. Then in verse 14 he resumes what he started out to say and goes on with his great prayer for them. This was profoundly psychological and it was profoundly Pauline. Already he has told how the door was opened for the admission of the Gentiles (2 : 11–22); but he has said nothing about what he had to do with it. Now is the psychological moment. And with Paul's temperament, how could he help stopping here to tell the Gentile Christians, to whom he is writing, of the wonder of the revelation which God had made to him and of the wonderful grace of God in choosing and commissioning him to be the revealer and proclaimer of that revelation to the world. Though he started out to tell them how he prayed for them (verses 14–19), he cannot and will not resist the temptation to linger long enough to explain to them why he prays for them and indeed to tell them all about it. The thought of God's grace in conferring on him this privilege and honor always fires his heart. **If so be that ye have heard.** This is a modest way of introducing the subject, but it makes it impossible to hold that this epistle was intended for, and sent to the Ephesians alone. Would he, could he, write thus to a church which he himself had founded (Acts 18 : 19; 19 : 8, 10), and whose pastor he had been for "the space of three years" (Acts 20 : 31)? **Of the dispensation** = stewardship. The word, for example, is used in Lk. 16 : 2, 3, 4 of oversight and administration of property; here it is the trusteeship and administration of grace committed to Paul for the Gentiles. **To you-ward.** Though it was given *to* Paul, it was not *for* Paul. It was for them, so Paul considered himself a debtor (as he says in so many words in Rom. 1 : 14), not because of what he had received *from* the Gentiles, but because of what he had received *for* the Gentiles.

3. **How that by revelation.** If they had not yet heard, Paul wants them to know and will now tell them that it was not by any intermediate or roundabout way that the secret purpose of God was made known to him, but by direct revelation. He had said the same thing

revelation was made known unto me °the mystery,
4. °as I wrote afore in few words, °whereby, when ye
read, ye can perceive my understanding in the mystery
5. of Christ; °which in other generations was not made
known unto the sons of men, °as it hath now been re-
vealed °unto his holy apostles and prophets in the
6. Spirit; °*to wit*, °that the Gentiles are fellow-heirs,

in Gal. 1 : 16 and Gal. 1 : 1. **The mystery.** The till then unrevealed secret of God. The words *mystery* and *revelation* are frequently used by Paul correlatively, as here. **As I wrote afore in few words** = as I have already told you briefly. This does not refer to another epistle, but to what he said in the preceding part of this epistle, namely, 2 : 11–22.

4. **Whereby.** In the reading of which you will be able to understand the knowledge which I have. He has not given a full exposition of it, but enough to enable them to see that he has a special knowledge of the secret of Christ and therefore special authority to write of it. Out of modesty he says knowledge *in* the mystery of Christ.

5. **Which in other generations was not made known unto the sons of men.** What that mystery or secret is, is expressly stated in the next verse; and up to the time of Paul it was, as a matter of fact, practically unknown to men. **As it hath now been revealed.** As said before, the words *mystery* and *revelation* are constant correlatives in this and the companion epistle to the Colossians. The *as* here is comparative. The mystery had not been made known with the fulness and clearness that it has now been revealed. The ultimate inclusion of the Gentiles was made known in a way to the ancients. Even to Abraham it was said, "In thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed." So also with greater clearness in several of the prophets, particularly Isaiah, chaps. 40–66. **Unto his holy apostles and prophets.** The prophets of Paul's day are meant, as in 4 : 11. It was first fully revealed to Paul. Others were slow to accept it, but afterwards did accept it, Acts 15 and Gal. 2 : 2–10. Some have gone as far as to say that Paul could never have called the apostles holy, as he was one of them, and therefore he did not write this epistle. Holy is the word that has been several times used in this epistle and translated saints, meaning God's people, set apart for him. "Not their holiness but God's hallowing was in question." In verse 8 Paul classes himself among the saints or holy ones, but it is not inconsistent with modesty, with even humility, there, for he calls himself less than the least of them.

6. **To wit.** He here gives a clear, full, explicit statement of what

°and fellow-members of the body, °and fellow-partakers of the promise °in Christ Jesus °through the gospel,
7. °whereof I was made a minister, °according to the gift of that grace of God °which was given me according to the
8. working of his power. °Unto me, °who am less than

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the mystery or secret is about which he has so much to say. **That the Gentiles are fellow-heirs.** Joint possessors with the Jews of the inheritance of God's people. What a startling statement! What a revolutionary revelation! **And fellow-members of the body.** The Gentiles are incorporated with the Jews into the body of which Christ is the head, and so they are concorporate with them. This Latin compound is the exact equivalent, in formation and meaning, of the Greek word which Paul here uses. **And fellow-partakers of the promise.** Joint partakers of that which was promised — salvation through Christ. The word *promise* is here used of the thing promised, as the word *hope* is often used for the thing hoped for. **In Christ Jesus.** By virtue of being brought into union with Christ Jesus, where alone salvation can be found, whether by Jew or Gentile, the Gentiles are coheirs, concorporate, copartakers, with the Jews; all are on an absolute equality, there is no longer any distinction whatsoever. **Through the gospel.** By means of which they are brought into union with Christ. Verse 6, together with the whole tone and complexion of the epistle, is a plain note of Paul's authorship. It claims for the Gentiles an equality and union with the Jews in entire harmony with Paul's position as shown in Romans and Galatians, but inconceivable in the second century when the Gentiles had attained not only a recognized position but a predominance in the church.

7. **Whereof I was made a minister.** That is, of the gospel, as in Col. 1 : 23, 24, a closely parallel passage. He not only had the revelation of the secret that the Gentiles were included equally with the Jews, he was authoritatively made a minister of the gospel by the preaching of which the Gentiles were to be brought in, and actually had been brought in. **According to the gift of that grace of God.** As he did not take this office or honor unto himself, but was appointed thereto by God, so he was not made a minister in consideration of his worthiness or merit, but only by the bestowment of God's grace. **Which was given me according to the working of his power.** This is a description of the form in which this grace manifested or expressed itself in him. It was in the form of energetic effectual inworking of power, God's power.

8. **Unto me.** Here he breaks in with an outburst of great emotional depth and fervor (cf. Rom. 7 : 25), lest while glorifying his

the least of all saints, °was this grace given, °to preach
unto the Gentiles the °unsearchable riches of Christ;
9. °and to [1] make all men see what is the [2] dispensation
of the mystery °which from all ages hath been hid in
10. God °who created all things; °to the intent that
°now °unto the principalities and the powers in the

[1] Some ancient authorities read *bring to light what is.* [2] Or, *stewardship*

ministry he should seem to be glorifying himself. The pronoun has double emphasis; it is the emphatic form and it stands first. **Who am less than the least of all saints.** Paul here makes a new comparative out of an existing superlative. The word in English would be *leaster*. Compare the English *lesser* and *chiefest*. "Never did a man more stoutly press his claims; never was a man more conscious of personal unworthiness." **Was this grace given.** Note how often he uses the word *grace* or words of similar import, in all connections. **To preach unto the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ.** A definition of what the grace consisted in. **Unsearchable riches.** These words are but the reflection of Paul's own experience of what Christ had been to him for more than a quarter of a century. While Christ continually satisfies the human heart, otherwise insatiable, he continually creates new hunger and new capacity for himself, and so there is no exhausting of him.

9. **And to make all men see.** The reading of the margin is better attested and is intrinsically much preferable to that of the text. Thus it would be, *and to bring to light*, to bring forth from hiding, to make clear what is the meaning of that method of administration by which God has carried out his secret purpose. **Which from all ages hath been hid in God.** That is, from all eternity has been known only to God, implying that not even angels knew the secret. No wonder Paul is overwhelmed with the favor that was shown him of being thus taken into the secret counsels of God! **Who created all things.** These words link together God's unrevealed purpose of universal redemption through Christ with the creation of the universe, and at least suggest that the world was created with reference to the realization of that purpose. This is elsewhere clearly intimated by Paul, as in 1 : 4; Col. 1 : 16, 17.

10. **To the intent that . . . might be made known.** This is stated as the object of *the bringing to light* of the preceding verse. **Now.** After so many ages of hiding. **Unto the principalities and the powers.** What God does in execution of his eternal purpose for humanity is to be a demonstration to the beings of the heavenly sphere as well as

heavenly *places* might be made known °through the
11. church °the manifold wisdom of God, °according to
the [1] eternal purpose °which he purposed in Christ Jesus
12. our Lord: °in whom we have boldness and access in
13. confidence through [2] our faith in him. °Wherefore I
ask °that [3] ye faint not at my tribulations for you,
which °[4] are your glory.

[1] Gr. *purpose of the ages.* [2] Or, *the faith of him* [3] Or, *I* [4] Or, *is*

to men of the wisdom of God. Peter in his first epistle represents angels as intently studying the meaning of the gospel and the plan of redemption (1 Pt. 1 : 12). **Through the church.** The church, the body of redeemed men, is the visible materialization, so to speak, of the eternal purpose of God which till now has been eternally hidden in himself. Perhaps Paul means that the manifestation and realization of the purpose of God in the body of redeemed humanity, the church, furnishes the justification of creation and the vindication of God's wisdom in creation and redemption, which till now was wanting — a philosophy of history. **The manifold wisdom.** Practically the same as Paul's expression in Rom. 11 : 33.

11. **According to the eternal purpose.** To be taken with *might be made known* in verse 10. **Which he purposed in Christ Jesus.** Rather, which he executed or accomplished in Christ, since what follows refers, not to the forming of the purpose, but to its being carried into effect.

12. **In whom we have boldness and access.** This is the proof from their inward actual experience of the preceding declaration that God did, as a matter of fact, carry into execution his eternal purpose in Christ Jesus. For it is by virtue of our union with him that we have the boldness which we, as Christians, have and the access to God which we have experienced by reason of our confidence, the feeling of confidence that is brought about as a result of the faith that we have exercised in him. Practically the same thought as in Rom. 5 : 2. Compare also Heb. 10 : 19, 22.

13. **Wherefore** = on account of what he has said in verses 2–12 concerning his relation to the gospel and the grace which bestowed such honor and happiness on him. **That ye faint not at my tribulations for you.** They might be tempted to feel grieved, humiliated, disheartened, that they were the cause of the tribulations which he was forced to undergo. But "no," he answers, "do not feel so, for these very tribulations **are your glory**, as they are a source of joy to me." (So he says in Col. 1 : 24; Phil. 2 : 17, 18; 2 Cor. 12 : 10).

VII. Paul's Lofty Prayer and Prophetic Doxology for Them, 3 : 14–21

14. °For this cause °I bow my knees °unto the Father,
15. °from whom every [1] family in heaven and on earth is
16. named, °that he would grant you, according to the riches of his glory, °that ye may be strengthened °with

[1] Gr. *fatherhood.*

They were their glory in that they were a testimony to the value set upon them by him who suffered and by him who appointed him to suffer in their behalf.

14. **For this cause.** These words return to verse 1 and take up what he had there begun to say when he was led away by the word "Gentiles" into the splendid digression of verses 2–13. This phrase, then, is the connecting link between his statement (in 2 : 11–22) of the former and the present condition of his Gentile readers and the prayer which he now utters for them. Knowing, as he did, their former and their present condition, he knows also how to pray for them and therefore does pray for them, thus: **I bow my knees.** I prostrate myself in prayer, an unusual form expressing great earnestness and intensity. **Unto the Father.** Used here qualitatively in the absolute sense.

15. **From whom every family.** The margin renders this word "fatherhood." This preserves the play on the words which cannot be otherwise reproduced in English. It may be roughly imitated in the rendering, "from whom all fatherhood is named." God is the prototype of fatherhood, whether in heaven or on earth. It is to him as Father, as Father of fathers, as Fountain of fatherhood and all fatherliness, that Paul prays in their behalf who are his children.

16. **That he would grant you, according to the riches of his glory.** In the prayer in Chap. 1 : 17 ff. is the expression, "Father of glory," and Paul evidently here amplifies the content of it into a fuller form. What was implicit there he makes explicit here. Paul is praying to him who is his Father in behalf of others who are children of the same Father; and the measure according to which he asks him to give is the wealth of that divine Father's glory — whatever that may be (cf. Rom. 9 : 23). **That ye may be strengthened.** Here begins the enumeration of what he asks for them. The first thing he asks for is strengthening. **With power through his Spirit.** They were to be strengthened by means of power infused into them through the

17. power through his Spirit °in the inward man; °that Christ °may dwell °in your hearts °through faith; °to the end that ye, being rooted and grounded °in love,

Spirit of God. **In the inward man.** This is one of those indefinite phrases of Paul which even the ordinary reader knows the general meaning of, but which even the extraordinary reader cannot accurately define. Perhaps it refers more to the will than any other one thing.

17. **That Christ may dwell.** Is this clause subordinate to the preceding clause, expressing its purpose or result, and meaning "in order that Christ may dwell"? Or is it coördinate with the preceding clause? And if it is coördinate, has it the same meaning as that clause, though expressed in a different way? Or does it add something further and something different? The last is probably the correct view (though all three are grammatically possible, and each one is held by some interpreters) = "that he may grant you also that Christ may dwell in your hearts." **May dwell in your hearts.** This furnishes a good instance of what has been said, that the great things written in this great epistle are the reflex of *experiences* which the writer himself had had. In Gal. 2 : 20 he says, "Christ liveth in me." No one can understand Paul or interpret Paul who has not had in some measure at least the experiences which he had had. Hence so many scholars repudiate him to-day. **In your hearts.** Practically equivalent to "the inward man" in the preceding verse. Compare Col. 2 : 27, "Christ in you." **Through faith.** This also is a reflex of Paul's experience, as further given in Gal. 2 : 20. As Christ first enters the heart on condition and by means of faith, just as truly does he dwell there on condition of faith consciously and continuously exercised in him. **In love.** Some commentators construe these words with what precedes them, with this sense, namely, that Christ through faith may dwell in your hearts in love = it is *in love* that the indwelling of Christ is manifested. But really this thought is included in the other construction, which is followed in the text, thus: In order that ye, being rooted and grounded in love as a consequence of the indwelling of Christ, may be strong, etc. Note the combination of figures in *rooted* and *founded;* so in Col. 2 : 7.

18. **To the end that ye . . . may be strong to apprehend.** The object of their being inwardly strengthened by means of power infused through the Spirit of God, which Paul prays for, and of Christ's dwelling in their hearts, which he prays for, is that they may be quite able, have full capacity, to understand. As has been pointed out, this prayer of Paul is a fuller expression of the prayer in chap. 1 : 17–21. There is a close parallel between both the substance and the language. In each case the prayer is directed to the Father (1 : 17; 3 : 14) with a

18. may be strong to apprehend °with all the saints °what
19. is the breadth and length and height and depth, °and
to know the love of Christ which passeth knowledge,
°that ye may be filled unto all the fulness of God.

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reference to his "glory" (1 : 17; 3 : 16). In each case the prayer is for the gift of the Holy Spirit (1 : 17; 3 : 16). The sphere of the action of the Spirit in each case is the heart or the inward man (1 : 18; 3 : 16). And the ultimate aim of all is the *knowledge* of the fulness of the divine purpose and the divine love (1 : 18 f.; 3 : 18 f.). "The prayer to *know* the mighty power (in 1 : 19) becomes the prayer to *have* the mighty power in order to be strong enough to know (3 : 19)." **With all the saints.** That ye may share with all the saints the knowledge which it is God's will for them to have. **What is the breadth and length and height and depth.** As "a parable must not be made to walk on all fours," so neither must this bold figure of Paul, however much it may lend itself to that sort of interpretation. It is a vague expression for vastness, immensity. It is similar in Rom. 8 : 39, where Paul speaks of "nor height, nor depth."

19. **And to know.** Does this add a new thought or is it another and parallel expression of that which immediately precedes? Paul seems almost to get lost in the vastness of his conceptions and the vagueness of his constructions in this great prayer. At any rate *we* get lost. No exposition has been given that does not leave the prayer unexplained and the reader unsatisfied. It is probable, though it is not certain, that the clause *and to know* is not parallel to the preceding, thus: That ye may be strong to apprehend the breadth and length and height and depth of the love of Christ and to know the love of Christ. This is an anticlimax, so it must be something else the breadth and length and height and depth of which Paul wants them to apprehend. It is difficult to say what. It may be God's eternal purpose, or the secret of his will, or, as is expressed in chap. 1 : 18, the hope of his calling, the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints, the exceeding greatness of his power for believers. Or it may be, indefinitely, the magnitude, in all its relations, of God's redemptive scheme in Christ. **And to know the love of Christ which passeth knowledge** = and, especially, to know the love of Christ, though it is in a sense a knowledge-surpassing love: strictly, it can never be known. **That ye may be filled unto all the fulness of God.** So that, after all, even knowledge is not the absolutely ultimate end. It is a means to the end, namely, that ye may be filled up to all the fulness of God, that is, up to the limit of all the fulness that God can give. Compare "increaseth with the increase of God" in Col. 2 : 19. See also Eph. 4 : 13.

20. Now unto °him that is able to do exceeding abundantly
above all that we ask or think, °according to the power
21. that worketh in us, unto him °*be* the glory in the church
and in Christ Jesus unto [1] all generations for ever and
ever. Amen.

VIII. The Motives and the God-provided Means for Realizing this Ideal Unity, 4 : 1–16

4. °I therefore, the prisoner in the Lord, °beseech you
°to walk worthily of the calling wherewith ye were

[1] Gr. *all the generations of the age of the ages.*

Confidence in God who can do far more than the prayer has asked draws from the heart of Paul a full and fervent outburst of praise, a lofty doxology.

20. **Him that is able.** God is able to do more than we ask, more than our imagination can conceive. **According to the power that worketh in us.** Paul judged of what God could do by what he had already done in and for them. "It is the conscious experience of the present working of the divine power that fills him with this exultant confidence."

21. **Be the glory in the church and in Christ Jesus.** The church is that by whose greatness and glory the glory of God is demonstrated, even as it is also in Christ Jesus himself. Indeed, the church is the organ through which Christ operates among men, as it is the scene where this glory of God is (or ought to be) most truly displayed among men.

Paul, having expounded the great spiritual truths that were "indicated," as the doctors say, by the situation and needs of his readers, now proceeds to give them practical directions as to how they are to live and act. And he here uses the three identical words that he used in introducing the practical section of Romans (12 : 1).

1. **I therefore.** In view of the glorious provision made by God for you and the grace actually bestowed by God upon you, as I have shown you. **I, the prisoner in the Lord.** The pronoun is emphatic and gathers up all that he has said about his unique relation to the revelation of Christ. The additional words, "the prisoner in the Lord," add a touch of feeling and increase the force of his appeal. See Col. 4 : 18, "Remember my bonds." **Beseech.** The word here means "entreat," "plead with." **To walk worthily of the calling** =

2. called, °with all lowliness °and meekness, °with long-
3. suffering, °forbearing one another °in love; °giving
diligence to keep the unity of the Spirit °in the bond of
4. peace. °*There is* one body, and one Spirit, °even as
5. also ye were called in one hope of your calling; °one

make your life worthy of your vocation. You have been called up and apart into a new order. Live worthily of it — *noblesse oblige.*

2. **With all lowliness.** This is the initial and, throughout, the fundamental disposition in the Christian character. It is put at the beginning and at the bottom in the Master's exposition of what true righteousness is — *poor in spirit.* It is radically the same as the word which Jesus uses to describe his own disposition, namely, *I am lowly in heart* (Mt. 11 : 29). In short, it is humility. **And meekness.** This is the basis of one of the beatitudes also, as it is another of the two fundamental traits of Jesus himself — *meek and lowly in heart.* But see *especially* Jn. 13 : 3–5 and Phil. 2 : 3, 5, 8. **With long-suffering.** This is the disposition that bears with patience the failings or the wrongs of others and is the opposite of revenge or resentment. **Forbearing one another.** This is the active expression of the inward disposition of longsuffering. **In love.** "Love suffereth long," 1 Cor. 13 : 4. It is the ground of all right dispositions and all right conduct as regards our fellow-men. For love does no wrong to his neighbor, Rom. 13 : 10 and 1 Cor. 13 : 4–8. The parallel passage in Colossians is very striking (Col. 3 : 12). See note there.

3. **Giving diligence to keep the unity of the Spirit.** Not merely endeavoring, as the A. V. has it, but making it a matter of special study of effort and eagerness. Here Paul reaches what has been called the dominant note of this great epistle — unity — though he has touched upon it in previous parts, as in 2 : 18, "We both have access in one Spirit unto the Father." *The unity of the Spirit* is the unity of spirit and aim and disposition brought about by the indwelling and ruling of the one Holy Spirit of God. **In the bond of peace.** Manifesting itself in peace, the uniting bond.

4. **There is one body, and one Spirit.** Practically equivalent to, For there is one body just as there is one Spirit, and surely that imposes the obligation of practical, realized unity. The body, of course, is the church, which is the body of true believers. The Spirit is the Holy Spirit. **Even as also ye were called in one hope of your calling.** It is one body, vitalized and unified by one Spirit and looking to the goal of one hope. Here is the first group of three unities, the first trinity of unities.

5. **One Lord, one faith, one baptism.** Here is the second group of

6. Lord, one faith, one baptism, °one God and Father of
7. all, who is over all, and through all, and in all. °But
°unto each one of us was the grace given according to
8. the measure of the gift of Christ. °Wherefore he saith,
When he ascended on high, he led captivity captive,
And gave gifts unto men.
9. (Now this, He ascended, what is it but that he also
10. descended [1] into the lower parts of the earth? He that
descended is the same also that ascended far above all

[1] Some ancient authorities insert *first*.

three unities, the second trinity of unities. The one body is dependent on the one Lord, who is its head, to whom it is united by one faith (in Christ) and one baptism (into Christ).

6. **One God and Father of all.** He rises to find the ultimate source of all unity in the one God and Father, the all-encompassing Unity who is transcendent over all, active through all, and immanent in all. The first group of unities brings to view the Holy Spirit; the second, the Lord Christ; the third, God, the Father.

7. **But.** Notwithstanding the inward vital unity of the whole, as just stated, we must now consider each one in his individuality when it comes to the matter of their functions and duties in life. **Unto each one of us was the grace given.** To each individual believer the same grace has been given, but not to each in the same measure. Christ gives it in different measures. This is quite Pauline and is strikingly paralleled in Rom. 12 : 6 ff., "Having gifts differing according to the grace given us."

8. **Wherefore he saith.** The bestowment of the various gifts by Christ reminds him of the passage in Psalm 68 : 18 which describes the victorious king of Zion returning from battle and ascending the heights of the citadel with the spoils, from which he bestows gifts on the people. "Paul in quoting this Psalm was probably guided by an old Jewish interpretation of it with which he was familiar" (Driver).

9. As Paul has mentioned the ascension of Christ, he will stop long enough by way of parenthesis to show that Christ has explored every part of the universe and fills the whole. His ascent at once implies a previous descent into the deepest depths and a rising to the highest heights. He descended to a depth below which there was no deeper, and he ascended to a height above which there was no higher — this seems to be the thought of Paul; and the following words seem in

11. the heavens, °that he might fill all things.), And he gave some *to be* °apostles; and some, °prophets; and some,
12. °evangelists; and some, °pastors and teachers; °for the perfecting of the saints, unto the work of ministering,
13. °unto the building up of the body of Christ: °till we all attain unto the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge

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keeping with this view, namely, **that he might fill all things.** Compare 1 : 23.

11. Paul now resumes after having introduced the parenthetical thought suggested by his reference to the ascension of Christ. He proceeds now to enumerate the "gifts" which the Ascended Conqueror "gave to men" — apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, and teachers. **Apostles** were those who had seen Christ (1 Cor. 9 : 1, 2), were witnesses of his resurrection (Acts 1 : 8, 21–23), had a commission from Christ himself, and had an unrestricted field of activity. **Prophets** were preachers who spoke under the impulse and inspiration of the Spirit and were not mere interpreters of what others had said. **Evangelists** were travelling missionaries, subordinate to the apostles, and went about preaching to the heathen under their authority and direction. **Pastors and teachers.** Two designations of the same class. They took care of the flock as shepherds and they taught them also. They were local and not itinerant as were the other three classes. They probably include bishops, elders, and deacons.

12. **For the perfecting of the saints unto the work of ministering.** This states the purpose for which the ascended Christ gave apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors and teachers. They were not only to serve themselves, but they were to equip and perfect every one of the body of believers for the work of serving. *Unto the work of ministering* is thus dependent on the preceding clause, and not coördinate with it as the comma in the text of the R. V. implies. **Unto the building up of the body of Christ.** This is the object of all the processes previously described. It is to build up the church. Note here again the combination of different figures. Here *the body is built up*, in 2 : 21 *the building grows.*

13. **Till we all attain unto the unity of the faith.** This is the goal they are to aim at and strive for *till* it is reached, namely, that faith in and knowledge of the Son of God may be one and the same in all, and no longer varying according to the influence of different teachers. The previously described processes are to go on until they shall all come to a full, accurate, and thorough knowledge of Jesus as the **Son of God** and have faith in him accordingly; or rather, till they all come to have *faith* in him as the Son of God which will ripen into and result

of the °Son of God, °unto a full-grown man, °unto the
14. measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ: °that
we may be no longer children, °tossed to and fro and
carried about °with every wind of doctrine, °by the
sleight of men, °in craftiness, °after the wiles of error;
15. °but [1] speaking truth in love, °may grow up in all
16. things into him, which is the head, *even* Christ; °from
whom all the body fitly framed and knit together

[1] Or, *dealing truly*

in a full, accurate, and thorough *knowledge* of him as the Son of God, for faith is the condition of knowledge. **Unto a full-grown man.** This is parallel and a sort of apposition to the preceding. It is the same as attaining oneness in faith in and knowledge of Christ as the Son of God. **Unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ.** This is only another way of viewing and expressing the same thing as "unto a full-grown man," as that was another way of expressing what immediately preceded it. "To the full measure of the complete stature, or completed maturity, of the fulfilled Christ."

Verse 14 states negatively the design of our attaining to the unity of the faith (verse 13), and verse 15 positively.

14. **That we may be no longer children,** as opposed to "full-grown men." **Tossed to and fro and carried about.** This is the figure of a ship abandoned on a tempest-tossed and billowy sea — the symbol of instability and insecurity. **With every wind of doctrine.** A very expressive phrase and very applicable to the confused and confusing multitude of varying theories and systems at this time. It implies that the readers of this epistle were exposed to false teachings, as we know of the Colossians. **By the sleight of men.** The literal meaning of the word is *dice*. It suggests the dexterous handling of the dice and so means here clever trickery for the purpose of deceiving. **In craftiness** = *by* craftiness (the same preposition as in the preceding phrase) by means of craftiness or cunning. **After the wiles of error.** "Looking to the scheming of error."

15. **But speaking truth in love.** Rather, maintaining the truth in love, as Paul is doing in this very epistle. **May grow up in all things into him.** Our growth in all points in which we grow shall proceed in relation to him who is head.

16. **From whom.** That is from Christ, who is the head. He is the source of the life of the church and of the growth of the church. As every part of the whole body depends for life and efficiency on its

°[1] through that which every joint supplieth, °according to the working in *due* measure of each several part, maketh the increase of the body °unto the building up of itself °in love.

IX. The Manner of Life they are to Live in Correspondence with the Lofty Origin, Plan, and Motives of their Salvation, 4 : 17–6 : 9

17. This I say °therefore, °and testify °in the Lord, that ye no longer walk °as the Gentiles also walk, °in

[1] Gr. *through every joint of the supply.*

being in connection with the head, and if severed from the head would be dead, so does every member of the spiritual body, the church, depend on Christ for life. Compare Col. 2 : 19 and Jn. 15 : 1–11. **Through that which every joint supplieth** = through every contact of the supply. This is the means. **According to the working.** Denotes the measure. **Unto the building up.** For the edification of itself. This expresses the end. **In love.** This indicates the sphere or respect in which the building up takes place. And all these clauses are modifiers of the main clause of the sentence, **maketh increase of the body.**

1. *Contrast with their former life as Gentiles*, 4 : 17–19

17. **Therefore.** This seems to be a sort of resumption of verse 1, for the purpose of showing what kind of a life is *not* worthy of their calling as children of God. The word *this* carries special emphasis. **And testify.** Better, *protest*, as in Gal. 5 : 3. **In the Lord.** His appeal to them is not enforced by ordinary prudential considerations, but has its ground in the Lord. When Paul is referring to the eternal purpose of God or to the provisions of grace made for the salvation of men, he speaks of Christ or the Christ; when he refers to the relations and duties that pertain to practical life, he speaks of them as in relation to or in subjection to him as Lord. **As the Gentiles also walk.** This is the second description in this epistle of the unregenerate life of the heathen. The former was in chap. 2 : 1–3. Here again he uncovers the hidden springs and processes of the gross immorality, the vice and the sin, that render repulsive the life of unregenerate heathenism. **In the vanity of their mind.** The word literally means *emptiness.*

18. the vanity of their mind, °being darkened in their
understanding, °alienated from the life of God °because
of the ignorance that is in them, because of the harden-
19. ing of their heart; °who being past feeling °gave them-
selves up to lasciviousness, [1] to work all uncleanness
20. with [2] greediness. °But ye did not so learn Christ;

[1] Or, *to make a trade of* [2] Or, *covetousness*

The verb is used in Rom. 1 : 21 of the reasonings of the heathen. Their speculations (about God) had no content of truth in them, they were simply nothing. The adjective of a synonymous word is used in Col. 2 : 8 in describing the so-called "philosophy" of the false teachers as "empty fraud."

18. **Being darkened in their understanding.** Compare Rom. 1 : 21, "Their foolish heart was darkened." They can but live in the vanity of their minds since their faculty of discernment has been darkened. They cannot see right and wrong. Some people are without the power of living according to the truth; some have lost the power of seeing the truth. It is the latter that Paul is describing. **Alienated from the life of God.** Strictly, being in a state of separation from the life which God gives, which is wrought by God in those who are enlightened, repent, and believe. It is practically the same as "without God" in chap. 2 : 12. **Because of the ignorance that is in them.** The cause of their alienation is their ignorance, which, in turn, is caused by the hardening of their hearts, and hence it is their own act and fault. "The emphasis which he lays on lack of knowledge corresponds with that which elsewhere in this epistle he lays on true wisdom."

19. **Who being past feeling.** The state of moral insensibility when one no longer feels the reproaches of conscience. What a fearful description! The estrangement, the utter separation, from the life of God is by these words proved, in conformity with their actual experience and moral condition = being such as, destitute of feelings of reproach or remorse or regret, **gave themselves up to lasciviousness.** Lasciviousness is here personified. They have surrendered, body and soul, to the tyranny of Lust, ready now for the pursuit and practice of *every form of uncleanness with greediness*, "with entire disregard of the rights of others" (Lightfoot).

2. They must experience thorough transformation in outward conduct and thorough renewal in their inward nature, 4 : 20–24

20. **But ye did not so learn Christ** (the Christ). Ye have learned

21. °if so be that ye heard him, and were taught in him,
22. even as truth is in Jesus: °that ye put away, °as concerning your former manner of life, °the old man,
23. °which waxeth corrupt °after the lusts of deceit; °and
24. that ye be renewed °in the spirit of your mind, °and put on the new man, °[1] which after God hath been created °in righteousness and holiness of truth.

[1] Or, *which is after God, created &c.*

Christ; and in learning him, you learned to renounce ignorance and darkness and hardness of heart and licentiousness of life.

21. **If so be that ye heard him.** Assuming, as I do, that you have heard him and received instruction in him, that is, if *he* was the sphere in which you received instruction, even as he is the sphere of truth itself. Compare Jn. 14 : 6, "I am the truth."

22. **That ye put away.** Lay off and lay aside and have done with. **The old man.** The man that you once were, so called in contrast with the new man, the new creation, that you are now to be. It is the moral state or nature of their prechristian life, represented as a person. **As concerning,** etc. So far as your former life is concerned. **Which waxeth corrupt.** There is a natural progressiveness in evil, in bad character. Bad men do not remain bad, they become worse. **After the lusts of deceit.** In conformity to those deceitful lusts which so blind and delude men as to make wrong seem right and bad seem good.

23. **And that ye be renewed.** This is present tense and denotes a continuous process = and that ye be continually renewed by a never-pausing process. **In the spirit of your mind.** You must continually be made new in the tone and temper of all your mental attitudes, aptitudes, and activities; new, in contrast with what the tone and temper of your mind and thoughts were before. There must be a process of continuous creation in the spirit, soul, and life, as science tells us there is in nature.

24. **And put on the new man.** Be a new somebody, living a new life, from new motives, with new ends in view. Bring your lives into correspondence with your new nature, your new relations, your new position. Be new people. **Which after God hath been created.** That is, this new character that you are to have, this new person that you are to be, is a creation new-made in accordance with the type and image of the One who created him — new-created by God and now like God. With Paul the moral transformation and renewal of conversion are conceived as a new creation rather than as a new

25. °Wherefore, putting away falsehood, speak ye truth
each one with his neighbour: for we are members one
26. of another. °Be ye angry and sin not: °let not the sun
27. go down upon your [1] wrath: °neither give place to the
28. devil. Let him that stole °steal no more: but rather
let him labour, working with his hands the thing that is
good, that he may have whereof to give to him that hath
29. need. °Let no corrupt speech proceed out of your mouth,

[1] Gr. *provocation.*

birth. **In righteousness and holiness of truth.** Holiness expresses our attitude and duty toward God; righteousness, toward men. **Of truth.** In verse 21 he spoke of the embodiment of truth in Jesus; in verse 25 he exhorts his readers to avoid falsehood and to speak the truth; here he describes the new being as created to resemble God in righteousness and holiness, which are of the truth.

3. *The details, positive and negative, intermingled all through, first the one, then the other,* 4 : 25–5 : 21

25. **Wherefore, putting away falsehood.** The Apostle enforces his general injunction to put off the old nature and put on the new by several particular prohibitions and precepts. He names and forbids six of the practices that belong to the old man: falsehood, unreasonable anger, stealing, bad language, bitterness and malice, lust. The prohibition of lying is followed by the positive command to speak always the truth with one's neighbor. The reason given is that they are members of one another — and to lie to one another, how contradictory!

26. **Be ye angry.** This seems to be a permissive imperative: Ye may be angry, only do not sin. In anger do not fall into sin. **Let not the sun go down on your wrath.** Before evening let your provocation be over.

27. **Neither give place to the devil.** Give not the devil an opportunity for doing harm and working mischief by an angry state of mind.

28. **Steal no more.** Stealing is to give place to honest labor, so that, instead of taking the property of others, he may have something to give to others who may be in need — instead of laziness and stealing, labor and liberality.

29. **Let no corrupt speech proceed.** The word translated corrupt means foul, rotten. Paul, then, here gives direction concerning the

but such as is good for [1] edifying as the need may be,
30. °that it may give grace to them that hear. °And
grieve not the Holy Spirit of God, °in whom ye were
31. sealed unto the day of redemption. Let all bitterness,
and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and railing, be
32. put away from you, with all malice: and be ye kind
one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving each other,
even as God also in Christ forgave [2] you.
5. °Be ye therefore °imitators of God, °as beloved

[1] Gr. *the building up of the need.* [2] Many ancient authorities read *us.*

conversation of his readers. He even considers it a matter of such importance that he returns to it in 5 : 4, where he is more specific and strict than here. **That it may give grace to them that hear.** Their conversation must not only do no harm, it must be a means of benefit and a channel of blessing.

30. **And grieve not the Holy Spirit of God.** This should not begin a new sentence as if he had gone on to a different subject. The connection is this: Let no filthy words ever proceed out of your mouth, and do not by such unclean speech grieve the Spirit of God. It is a matter of fact and experience that the use of filthy language does produce a reflex effect in the heart as if the light had gone out; and a sense of darkness and shame succeeds. **In whom ye were sealed unto the day of redemption.** This is practically a repetition of what was said in chap. 1 : 13, 14. For the meaning of sealing see the note on that passage.

Each of Paul's injunctions is enforced by a grave consideration. Falsehood is inconsistent with membership in the body. Cherished irritation makes room for the evil spirit. Stealing is the direct opposite of the honest labor that toils for that with which to help others. Speech that is corrupt not only breaks down instead of building up, but it actually grieves and drives away the Spirit of God. The injunction to put away bitter feelings and the brawling and railing to which they give rise is enforced by an appeal to the character and action of God himself. You must forgive each other, he says, because God in Christ has forgiven you all (Robinson).

1. **Be ye therefore.** Rather, *become* ye therefore. This is clearly a close continuation of the preceding verses, 4 : 31, 32, and should not by any means be put off into a new paragraph, as is done even in the Revised Version and the American Revision. Much less should it mark the beginning of a new chapter. In the text of Westcott and

2. children; °and walk in love, even as Christ also loved
you, and gave himself up for [1] us, °an offering and a
3. sacrifice to God for an odour of a sweet smell. °But
fornication, °and all uncleanness, °or covetousness,
°let it not even be named among you, °as becometh

[1] Some ancient authorities read *you*.

Hort there is no break whatever. **Imitators of God.** In the preceding verse he had said "God forgave you"; do ye then be imitators of God and forgive those who harm you. **As beloved children.** Children imitate their parents, so do ye imitate your Father. In the word "beloved" is couched a tender appeal. If they know they are beloved of God, it will make it easier to do the hard thing of forgiving those who had wronged them.

2. **And walk in love.** *Walk* is the key-note of this whole section (4 : 1–5 : 21). Let love be the element in which your walk shall be, even such love as Christ had for you, prompting him to give himself up for you — a self-sacrificing love. **An offering and a sacrifice to God for an odour of a sweet smell.** These words refer to the sacrifice of Christ, of course, but as they have no theological reference or significance here, they cannot be used in defence of any special theory of the atonement. Almost the identical words are used by Paul of the present which the Philippians sent to him in prison by Epaphroditus. See Phil. 4 : 18, "I am filled, having received from Epaphroditus the things that came from you, an odour of a sweet smell, a sacrifice acceptable, well-pleasing to God."

3. **But fornication.** There should be no break here; the Apostle goes right on naming and characterizing those things with which they are to have nothing to do. He has named five already. This is the sixth. **And all uncleanness.** This includes every form of sexual impurity, whether in word, look, or thought. **Or covetousness.** This sin is over and over mentioned by Paul in close connection with unchastity in its various forms. They were the two prevalent and common sins of the ancient heathen world, and they are also of the modern Christian world. **Let it not even be named among you.** The five preceding prohibitions stood side by side in a sort of *staccato* style or movement, with no connecting particles to bind them together or to make transition from one to the other. But when he comes to the twin sins of fornication and avarice, he introduces them with a particle having an adversative force, as if to call special attention to them — *but*, as to fornication or covetousness let me say they are not to have the toleration or recognition of even being spoken of by you. **As becometh saints,** *i.e.* not to mention those things. The saints are

4. saints; °nor filthiness, °nor foolish talking, or jesting, °which are not befitting: °but rather giving of thanks.
5. °For this ye know of a surety, °that no fornicator, °nor unclean person, °nor covetous man, which is an idolator, hath any inheritance °in the kingdom of Christ and God.
6. °Let no man deceive you with empty words: °for because of these things cometh the wrath of God upon the

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a new order of purity in the earth and to belong to it imposes a new order of obligation: *noblesse oblige*.

4. **Nor filthiness.** Not merely in words, but however practised, in word, look, gesture, or act. The context shows that it is filthiness in connection with sins of the flesh. **Nor foolish talking.** Idle, aimless, empty, foolish talk, such as that of the professional laughter-maker, with a suggestion of vulgarity from the context; the word is in bad company. **Or jesting.** The context and company in which this word occurs suggest a doubtfully turned witticism, a witticism suggestive of something unchaste, such as may be heard in any theatre in these days. **Which are not befitting.** Are not becoming to saints; referring to last three words. **But rather giving of thanks.** A word which in the Greek sounds very strikingly like the Greek word for *jesting*, just preceding, and possibly suggested by this similarity of sound. Some one has suggested: "Let the grace of wit be superseded by the higher grace of thanksgiving."

5. **For this ye know of a surety.** This you are aware of from your own knowledge. *This* refers to the statement following: For this you know your own selves without my telling you, namely, **that no fornicator,** one guilty of the deed. **Nor unclean person.** A person unchaste in any way or degree short of actual fornication. **Nor covetous man.** Again the vice of covetousness is associated with that of lewdness as in verse 3. **In the kingdom of Christ and God.** Note that he does not say the kingdom of Christ and of God, but of Christ and God. Some take this to mean the kingdom of him who is Christ and God. But this cannot be maintained here. The passage in 1 Cor. 15 : 24 will show why Paul calls it the kingdom of Christ and God. The one kingdom belongs to both.

6. **Let no man deceive you with empty words.** With empty words, words that have no truth, no reason in them. This warning shows that they were exposed to danger from false teachers (so also in 4 : 14). Those here referred to evidently tolerated and palliated the vice of sensuality, and defended or excused covetousness, and also taught that these sins would not exclude men from the kingdom of God. **For because of these things.** Indeed, says Paul, these are the very

7. sons of disobedience. °Be not ye therefore partakers
8. with them; °for ye were once darkness, °but are now
9. light in the Lord: walk as children of light (°for the
fruit of the light is in all goodness and righteousness
10. and truth), °proving what is well-pleasing unto the
11. Lord; °and have no fellowship with the °unfruitful
works of darkness, °but rather even [1] reprove them;

[1] Or, *convict*

things that bring down the wrath and judgment of God on the disobedient even in this world, though not in this world only.

7. **Be not ye therefore partakers with them.** *Become* not. The Apostle warns them not only against *being* but against *becoming* partakers with them, *i.e.*, against allowing themselves to *lapse* into their sinful practices.

8. **For ye were once darkness.** A similar use of the past tense is found in Rom. 6 : 17, "ye *were* the servants of sin." It is this very difference between their past and their present that furnishes the reason why he warned them: As your former experience of darkness is *past*, do not return to it; do not lapse again into a participation in those vices which you have turned away from. **Ye were darkness.** A form or figure of speech not unlike that which we use in English — why, you were once darkness itself. **But are now light in the Lord.** The same form of speech. You were formerly darkness itself so benighted were you; but now, on the contrary, you are the very light itself, so illuminated and illuminating have you become. Compare also Mt. 5 : 14. Indeed, you are born of the light; live then in such a way as will show that you have the nature and characteristics of your mother — as children of light.

9. **For the fruit of the light is in.** The products of light consist in goodness of every form, righteousness, truth. That is, these *are* the products of light. If you then are the children of light and yourselves light, show in your lives the goodness, righteousness, truth, which are the fruits of the light.

10. **Proving what is well-pleasing unto the Lord.** This is to be taken with the words *walk as children of light* in verse 8. By walking in the light they will test, find out, prove, what is well-pleasing to God, just as in Rom. 12 : 2.

11. **And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness.** Practically the same as verse 7, Become not partakers with them. **Unfruitful works of darkness.** Light has fruit, goodness, righteousness, truth; darkness does works, but bears no such fruit. Compare

12. °for the things which are done by them in secret it is a
13. shame even to speak of. But all things when they are
[1] reproved are made manifest by the light: for everything
14. that is made manifest is light. °Wherefore *he* saith,
Awake, thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and
Christ shall shine upon thee.
15. °Look therefore carefully how ye walk, °not as

[1] Or, *convicted*

Gal. 5 : 19, 22. **But rather even reprove them.** They must not be content to refrain from participation in the doings of darkness, they must convict them or expose them. For it is the property of light to expose what is hidden in the dark or in secret.

12. **For . . . it is a shame even to speak of.** This gives the reason why they are to reprove and expose the works of darkness, for they are so very bad they cannot be talked about and they therefore must be convicted.

13. The meaning of verse 13 is something like this: "Exposure by light is manifestation; the manifested is light; even darkness made manifest is turned to light."

14. **Wherefore he saith.** This may be an adaptation of the language of Is. 60 : 1, "Arise, shine; for thy light is come and the glory of the Lord is risen upon thee," though there are difficulties in this view. Ellicott says the words quoted by Paul occur in substance in Isaiah, and that Paul, speaking under inspiration, is expressing in a summary form the spiritual meaning of the passage. At any rate, this call to the sons of disobedience to awake out of sleep and to rise from the death of sin confirms the necessity of reproving or exposing them; and the promise "Christ shall shine upon thee" confirms the salutary influence of the light under which the reproof or exposure places them.

15. **Look therefore carefully how ye walk.** He has been speaking about the attitude and duty of believers toward those who are still in darkness. This is a direct continuation of the same subject and still has in view outsiders. There should be no break, no beginning of a new paragraph at verse 15. The word *therefore* itself shows that he is treating the same subject. It is the Greek particle of retrospective reference. **Not as unwise, but as wise.** A more specific definition of the words of the preceding injunction. The two are combined in the parallel passage of Colossians, *Walk in wisdom toward those that are without* (Col. 4 : 5). It requires wisdom, some call it *tact*, to deal properly and effectively with those who are not Christians.

16. unwise, but as wise; °[1]redeeming the time, °because the
17. days are evil. °Wherefore be ye not foolish, °but un-
18. derstand what the will of the Lord is. °And be not drunken with wine, °wherein °is riot, °but be filled
19. [2] with the Spirit, speaking [3] one to another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making
20. melody with your heart to the Lord; °giving thanks always for all things °in the name of our Lord Jesus
21. Christ °to [4] God, even the Father; °subjecting yourselves one to another °in the fear of Christ.

[1] Gr. *buying up the opportunity.* [2] Or, *in spirit* [3] Or, *to yourselves* [4] Gr. *the God and Father.*

16. **Redeeming the time.** Literally the words mean *buying up for yourselves the opportunity.* You are to show yourselves wise by buying up for yourselves the opportunity for reaching and rescuing those who are still in the outer darkness. The price to be paid is the pains and effort required. **Because the days are evil.** As the opportunities are so few in such evil days as these, be the more eager to seize them when they come.

17. **Wherefore be ye not foolish.** Do not *become* foolish, or *show yourselves* foolish, undiscerning, when the opportunity comes. **But understand what the will of the Lord is.** There is a divine purpose and plan even in the midst of the prevailing evil. If you are truly the children of light, you will discover it and act accordingly.

18. **And be not drunken with wine.** This is a particular instance of what he meant by being foolish, senseless. **Wherein.** In being drunk with wine. **Is riot.** Not excess, as the A. V. has. It is dissoluteness. **But be filled with the Spirit.** There is a spiritual fulness brought about by the Holy Spirit. It does not result in dissoluteness and riot, but "in a gladness of cheerful intercourse, psalm and hymn and spiritual song, a melody of hearts singing to the Lord."

20. **Giving thanks always for all things.** Paul had the thanksgiving spirit and habit, and he had the habit of trying to get others to have it. Thanksgiving is a recurrent note of great frequency in these later epistles, Ephesians, Colossians, and Philippians; but it is not by any means wanting in his very first epistle, for he says in 1 Thess. 5 : 17, "Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, *in everything give thanks.*" **In the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.** As being believers on him, disciples of his, in union with him and bearers of his name. **To God, even the Father.** To him who is God and Father. Though all

22. Wives, *be in subjection* unto °your own husbands,
23. °as unto the Lord. For °the husband is the head of
the wife, as Christ also is the head of the church, °*being*
24. himself the saviour of the body. °But as the church
is subject to Christ, [1] so °*let* the wives also *be* to their

[1] Or, *so* are *the wives also*

blessings come to us *through* Christ, they all, including Christ himself, come *from* God the Father. Hence our thanksgiving is to be directed to him.

21. **Subjecting yourselves one to another.** This is a modal definition parallel to *giving thanks* and shows what our relation and attitude to each other are to be, as the participle *giving thanks* shows what our attitude to God is to be. **In the fear of Christ.** This is the motive of the subordination to each other which he has just enjoined. This is clearly illustrated in chap. 6 : 5, where he commands slaves to be obedient to their masters *as unto Christ*, and still more clearly in Col. 3 : 22, "Servants, obey your masters in singleness of heart, *fearing the Lord.*"

4. *The Christian subordination and regulation of three domestic relations, the most vital and decisive of all human relations,* 5 : 22–6 : 9.

22. Having given in verse 21 the general rule of mutual subordination, he now proceeds to apply it to specific relations. Here is the eternal principle of authority and obedience. And Christ himself was not exempt from it: "I came not to be ministered unto, but to minister." "Not my will, but thine be done." The centurion discovered this disposition of obedience in Christ when he said, "I *also* (as well as thou) am a man under authority." **Your own husbands.** The word "own" contains an appeal to the woman's feeling and pride. **As unto the Lord.** As though in obeying your husband you were obeying the Lord Christ.

23. **The husband is the head of the wife.** Greek — a husband is head of his wife. **Being himself the saviour of the body** (the church). "A man is head of his wife as Christ also is the head of the church, although there is a great difference, since Christ is himself the saviour of the body of which he is head."

24. **But:** Notwithstanding this difference, **let the wives be subject to their husbands in everything.** "It is presupposed that the authority of the husband is always exercised in accordance with their rela-

25. husbands in everything. Husbands, love your wives,
even °as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself
26. up for it; °that he might sanctify it, having cleansed it
27. by the [1] washing of water with the word, °that he
might present the church to °himself a glorious *church*,
not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing; °but that
28. it should be holy and without blemish. °Even so ought
husbands to love their own wives as their own bodies.

[1] Gr. *laver*.

tion as corresponding to that between Christ and the church." Paul does not give the husband authority to compel his wife to obey. He instructs the wife to do this of her own accord. If she does not, Paul does not say the husband is to extort it from her. But of course the wife in that case is answerable to God for disobedience to him.

The amplification of Paul's advice to husbands beyond what he says in Colossians is one among many proofs that Colossians preceded this epistle. All that he there says to husbands is this: "Husbands, love your wives, and be not bitter against them."

25. **As Christ also loved the church.** That is, so as to give up his life for it. Chrysostom says on this, "Wouldst thou that thy wife should be in subjection to thee as the church is to Christ? Then care for her as Christ for the church."

26. **That he might sanctify it.** This expresses the purpose of his giving himself up, in preceding verse. The aim of his death was that after having brought about for the church the forgiveness of their prechristian sins, he would make it partaker of holiness by the word (of the gospel), cf. Jn. 17 : 17.

27. **That he might present the church.** He means at the parousia. The remote aim of his giving himself up for the church and the words immediately depend on, *that he might sanctify it.* **Himself to himself.** Such is the order of the words in Greek. As has been said, "Christ does not permit attendants to present the bride. He does it himself. He presents, and he receives." **But that it should be holy.** That it should not have spot or wrinkle, but that, etc.

28. **Even so.** This is probably a wrong construction. More probably it should be rendered: Husbands ought so to love their own wives as their own bodies. But not only does he say that husbands should love their wives as their own bodies; he virtually says that the wife *is* the body, for he that loveth his wife loveth his own body. The man in loving his wife is loving himself.

29. He that loveth his own wife loveth himself: °for no
man ever hated his own flesh; but nourisheth and
30. cherisheth it, even as Christ also the church; °because
31. we are members of his body. °For this cause shall a
man leave his father and mother, and shall cleave to
32. his wife; and the twain shall become one flesh. °This
mystery is great: °but I speak in regard of Christ and of
33. the church. °Nevertheless do ye also °severally love
each one °his own wife even as himself; °and *let* the
wife *see* that she fear her husband.

29. **For no man ever hated his own flesh.** For if he hated her, he would be hating his own flesh, whereas he, on the contrary, nourishes and cherishes it, even as Christ does the church.

30. **Because we are members of his body.** This gives the reason for the preceding words: Christ nourisheth and cherisheth the church *because* we are members of his body.

31. **For this cause.** For what cause? In the passage which Paul has in mind and which he here quotes, it is because woman was originally taken from man and was therefore "bone of his bones and flesh of his flesh" (Gen. 2 : 23, 24). But this is probably not what Paul means by the phrase "for this cause." He probably adapts the phrase to the course of his own thought and means because a man is to love his wife as Christ loved the church and for the sake of the church left his rank and state of equal association with the Father and became identified with the church as one body, therefore, *for this cause*, shall a man leave his father and mother and shall cleave to his wife and *they* twain shall become one flesh.

32. **This mystery is great.** That is, the mystery of the closeness of the relation between husband and wife, which, by the way, implies a sacredness and an inviolability far above the gross and merely sexual conceptions of the marriage relation which are common and growing more so to-day, and which are openly taught in some of the leading works of fiction of this day. **But I speak in regard of Christ and of the church.** But in speaking of the closeness of the marriage relation, as I have just done, I speak of it in its deeper application, in reference to Christ and the church.

33. **Nevertheless.** However, not to insist any further on the mystical significance of marriage as bearing on the relation of Christ and the church, but to return to the practical duty of husband and wife, I will say, **do ye also**, after the example of Christ. **Severally . . . each one.** This would strike every husband that was present

6. Children, obey your parents °in the Lord: °for this is
2. right. °Honour thy father and mother (°which is the
3. first commandment with promise), °that it may be well with thee, and thou [1] mayest live long on the [2] earth.
4. °And, ye fathers, °provoke not your children to wrath: °but nurture them °in the chastening °and admonition °of the Lord.

[1] Or, *shalt* [2] Or, *land*

and listening to the reading of this letter. **His own wife.** Paul has used this form of speech several times in this paragraph to wives and husbands. It is very significant. It contains a sort of *ad hominem* appeal — she is your own wife, your very own, you ought to love her because she *is* your own. **And let the wife.** Rather, *but* the wife. The particle is slightly contrastive. The husband is to love his wife even as himself; *but* the wife is not to forget her duty: **let her see that she fear her husband.** Interpreted by the instructions already given to wives in verses 22–24, this means that the wife is to recognize in her inward feeling and to respect in outward conduct and action the authority of her husband.

1. The simple injunction to children to obey their parents, as found in Colossians (3 : 20), is considerably amplified here. **In the Lord.** Of course this does not mean your parents in the Lord, but describes the spirit in which the obedience is to be given. **For this is right.** That is, it is right in itself, as it is also in accordance with the law of God which says,

2. **Honour thy father and mother.** Not only obey in outward act, but let your mental mood and attitude toward them be one of reverence and affection. **Which is the first commandment with promis** It is the first commandment that had a promise attached to it. Thi would appeal to children with a special force, who naturally look to the future and are pleased at the prospect of getting reward.

3. **That it may be well with thee, and thou mayest live long on he earth** (Dt. 5 : 16). A double promise of temporal prosperity and long life.

4. **And, ye fathers.** The *and* shows that the obligation was not all on one side — and you fathers, there are duties which you owe to your children. **Provoke not your children to wrath.** That is, by requiring of them unreasonable things, by too frequent or too severe punishment, by nagging them, or in any other way. **But nurture them.** In guarding against irritating them, you must not go to the other extreme of neglecting training and discipline altogether.

5. [1] Servants, be obedient unto them that according to
the flesh are your [2] masters, with fear and trembling, in
6. singleness of your heart, as unto Christ; not in the
way of eyeservice, as men-pleasers; but as [1] servants
7. of Christ, doing the will of God from the [3] heart; with
good will doing service, as unto the Lord, and not unto
8. men: knowing that whatsoever good thing each one doeth,
the same shall he receive again from the Lord, whether
9. *he be* bond or free. And, ye [2] masters, do the same
things unto them, and forbear threatening: knowing
that their Master and yours is in heaven, and there is
no respect of persons with him.

X. Farewell Appeal and Closing Word, 6 : 10–24

10. [4] Finally, [5] be strong in the Lord, and in the strength
11. of his might. Put on the whole armour of God,

[1] Gr. *bond-servants.* [2] Gr. *lords.* [3] Gr. *soul.* [4] Or, *From henceforth* [5] Gr. *be made powerful.*

In the chastening. Training by discipline. **And admonition.** Training by instruction. **Of the Lord.** Which is prescribed or in general indicated by the Lord.

5–9. This paragraph of instructions to slaves is the same, almost word for word, as that in Colossians (3 : 22–25). See comment on that passage.

10. **Finally.** He has come to the close of his great, some say his greatest, message. After the manner of a chief captain exhorting his soldiers on the eve of battle, Paul gives his fellow-soldiers a description of the foes they are to face, the forces they are to overcome, and then exhorts them to equip themselves in full armor for the struggle. **Be strong in the Lord, and in the strength of his might.** In the beginning the note of strength was touched; at the close it is sounded again. Recall how the Apostle piled up words for strength, power, might, in order to show the exceeding greatness of his power toward believers (1 : 19); and now he exhorts the readers here at the close to avail themselves of it in order to meet and vanquish the forces that oppose them.

11. **Put on the whole armour of God.** The emphasis is on the

°that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil.
12. °For our wrestling is not against flesh and blood, °but against the principalities, against the powers, °against the world-rulers of this darkness, °against the spiritual
13. *hosts* of wickedness in the heavenly *places*. °Wherefore

word *whole*, and not on God, as some say. The divineness of the armor is a matter of course, the completeness of it is what the apostle stresses. It is not that they need God, they knew that; it is that they need *all* that God can give, *all* the equipment that God can furnish. **That ye may be able to stand.** That ye may be able to stand and not fall in the face of the stratagems of the leader of the forces of evil.

12. **For our wrestling is not against flesh and blood.** Very well did I speak of the stratagems of the devil, for the struggle that we are engaged in is not against mere feeble man. It is not against human but superhuman powers. **But against the principalities, against the powers.** Paul here seems to recognize the reality of the hierarchy of invisible evil powers with their various grades and orders. This reopens the question as to what he means in chap. 1 : 21, on which see comment. **Against the world-rulers of this darkness.** A further description of the principalities and powers just mentioned — the rulers of this world, whose domain is the present darkness, those who extend their world-wide sway over the present spiritual and moral darkness (Meyer and Ellicott). **Against the spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places.** Here again Paul goes behind the scenes and exposes to view the mysterious powers of evil that work invisibly to hinder the good and increase the wickedness of this world. See a similar description and the comment, chap. 2 : 2.

In verses 13–17 we have the enumeration of the various parts of the panoply of God with which he so insistently urges them to arm themselves, as if the omission of any single part would insure defeat. Now whether we can discover why he calls truth the girdle, righteousness the breastplate, peace the marching sandals, faith the shield, salvation the helmet, and the word of God the sword of the Spirit, makes comparatively little difference. One thing is clear apart from all figures, and this is the essential thing: The panoply of God, or the full preparation and equipment of the Christian for the struggle which he must face and fight, consists of truth, righteousness, peace, faith, salvation, and the word of God. These are the realities behind the figures.

13. **Wherefore take up the whole armour of God.** Since we have such enemies to fight and overcome, you will need and must take on the complete armor which God supplies. This is the second time he has

take up the whole armour of God, °that ye may be able
to withstand in the evil day, °and, having done all, to
14. stand. °Stand therefore, °having girded your loins
with truth, °and having put on °the breastplate of
15. righteousness, °and having shod your feet with the pre-
16. paration of the gospel of peace; °withal taking up the

---

said this very thing (see verse 11). **That ye may be able to withstand.** That ye may be able successfully to meet and overcome in the day of battle and fierce conflict. **And, having done all, to stand.** Having won the victory, to stand, in possession of the field, and not lie prostrate in defeat.

14. **Stand therefore.** Stand then, ready for the fight. *Stand* is here used in opposition to *flee*, as it is also in verse 11. **Having girded your loins with truth.** The word *truth* here has no article and is used in its widest, most general sense, including the truth of the gospel and inward single-hearted sincerity, or truth objectively and subjectively considered. As the girdle was primary in the armor of the soldier, without which no other parts of the armor could be used to advantage, so if a man was without the truth of the gospel on the one hand or the quality of sincerity on the other, nothing else would be of any avail. This was primary, taking precedence of everything else. **And having put on.** All these participles are dependent on the verb *stand* and denote action antecedent to it. **The breastplate of righteousness.** Righteousness as a breastplate. This means actual righteousness of Christian character. As the breastplate protects the vital parts and organs, so when a man has a solidly righteous character, and the strength of the consciousness of that fact, he is proof against the assaults of sin. Exactly the same truth is taught by Jesus, though under a different figure, in the last part of the sermon on the Mount. "Whosoever heareth these sayings of mine and doeth them shall be like a man who dug deep and builded on the rock; and the rain and the floods and the winds beat upon that house; and it fell not, for it was founded on the rock" (Mt. 7 : 24, 25; Lk. 6 : 48).

15. **And having shod your feet with the preparation of the gospel of peace.** Soldiers could not march without good, strong, comfortable, durable military sandals. These formed their preparedness for marching, for the endurance necessary for long, arduous, fatiguing journeys. The preparedness of the Christian soldier for the endurance involved in the long journey on which he has set out is to be found in or comes from the gospel which brings to him peace — the removal of all discord, and the sense of harmony with God, with himself, and with all the world.

16. **Withal taking up the shield of faith** = the shield, which is faith.

shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to °quench
17. all the fiery darts of the evil *one*. °And take the helmet
of salvation, °and the sword of the Spirit, which is the
18. word of God: °with all prayer and supplication praying °at all seasons °in the Spirit, °and watching thereunto °in all perseverance °and supplication for all the

---

The shield was a large oblong covering of wood, strapped to one arm of the soldier, which he held in front of himself to "shield" himself from the missiles of the enemy. **Quench all the fiery darts of the evil one.** The reference is to arrows tipped with tow dipped in some combustible fluid and set on fire. The shields, often covered with hide, would catch and extinguish these so that they did no harm. These fiery darts represent fierce temptations. Faith would hold on patiently in the confidence that they would by yielding get into more suffering than they would escape, and that in a little while the temptation would be past. So faith was that which would enable them to endure temptation. **The evil one** here probably means the devil, as in other passages (Mt. 6 : 13; 1 Jn. 5 : 18).

17. **And take the helmet of salvation.** The helmet, which is salvation. In 1 Thess. 5 : 8 Paul says, "putting on for a helmet *the hope* of salvation." Here there is no such limitation and he means salvation itself; that is, appropriating and realizing salvation is putting on the helmet. **And the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.** This conception is probably taken from Is. 11 : 4, 5. Indeed nearly all these figures of the armor are taken from Isaiah, chaps. 59 : 17 and 11 : 4, 5. Compare also Heb. 4 : 12.

18. **With all prayer and supplication praying.** It would be clearer if the order were changed thus: Praying with all prayer, etc. The first is the general word for prayer, the second a more specific kind of prayer, namely, entreaty. **At all seasons.** Not only are they to pray in the use of *every form* of prayer and entreaty, but at every season, under all sorts of circumstances, in all moods and conditions, 1 Thess. 5 : 17. **In the Spirit.** In view of Gal. 4 : 6 and Rom. 8 : 15 this probably means in the Holy Spirit. In Jude 20 it is explicitly, "praying in the Holy Spirit." **And watching thereunto.** Since the unceasing prayer that Paul has enjoined might tend to weariness and listlessness, Paul puts them on their guard against such a tendency. Watching in this sense is different from what Jesus meant when he said, "Watch and pray lest ye enter into temptation." **In all perseverance.** Perseverance is the opposite of growing weary, fainting, giving up. **And supplication for all the saints.** This is the word for request or entreaty again. As Tychicus read these words in the as-

19. saints, °and on my behalf, °that utterance may be given
unto me °[1] in opening my mouth, °to make known with
20. boldness the mystery of the gospel, °for which I am an
ambassador in [2] chains; °that in it I may speak boldly,
as I ought to speak.
21. But that ye also may know my affairs, how I do,
Tychicus, the beloved brother and faithful minister

[1] Or, *in opening my mouth with boldness, to make known.* [2] Gr. *a chain.*

sembly of the church, the hearers would be reminded of their brethren, fellow-believers in Christ and partakers of the same experience and spirit throughout the world; and it would expand their vision, enlarge their hearts, and give them some sense of the unity of which Paul had said such grand things in the former part of the epistle (4 : 1–16).

19. **And on my behalf.** He put himself last, but he put himself in. This is a beautiful expression of Paul's dependence on the coöperation and help of his brother Christians and his confidence in them. **That utterance may be given me.** He did not ask their prayers for his personal advantage or comfort, or even for relief from affliction and deliverance from prison for its own sake, but only that utterance might be given him for preaching the glad tidings. What a lesson — and what a rebuke — to some preachers! **In opening my mouth.** On opening my mouth, *i.e.*, when I open my mouth. **To make known with boldness.** That is, that utterance may be given me to make known with openness, boldness of speech, the mystery or unrevealed secret which the gospel contains or is.

20. **For which I am an ambassador in chains.** *For which* means for the gospel — in behalf of which. In Colossians (4 : 3) it is "on account of which I am also in bonds." His imprisonment and confinement are what he had in mind when he asked them to pray that utterance might be given him. I am an ambassador in behalf of the gospel — but I am in chains and so I am shut off from preaching it, unless you pray for me that the opportunity of utterance may be given me. Compare Philem. 22. **That in it I may speak boldly.** Practically the same as, "in order that utterance may be given me to make known with boldness the mystery of the gospel," in the preceding verse.

21, 22. This paragraph is almost word for word the same as the corresponding paragraph in Colossians (4 : 7–9), the chief differences being the occurrence of the word *also* in this one and the mention of Onesimus in Colossians (4 : 9). The word *also* here implies that the

22. in the Lord, shall make known to you all things: whom
I have sent unto you for this very purpose, that ye may
know our state, and that he may comfort your hearts.
23. Peace be to the brethren, and °love with faith, from
24. God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. Grace
be with all them that love our Lord Jesus Christ °in
uncorruptness.

---

paragraph and epistle to the Colossians had already been written and the meaning would be here: But that ye also (as well as the Colossians, to whom I have written the same words) may know my affairs, etc. Ellicott says that "though the word 'also' *per se* cannot safely be relied on as an argument to prove the priority of Colossians, still on that hypothesis it admits of an easy and natural explanation."

23. As he began by wishing them peace and grace from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ, so, substantially, he closes. Compare 1 : 2. **Love with faith.** Faith was already there (1 : 15); he prays that love may be with it; may love be joined with your faith.

24. **In uncorruptness** = those who love our Lord Jesus Christ with an incorruptible, imperishable love.

And the epistle closes without a single personal salutation. Surely it could not have been written as a letter to the Ephesians alone, whose pastor Paul had been for three years (Acts 20 : 31).

APPENDIX I

The Relation between Colossians and Ephesians

The relation between the Epistle to the Colossians and that to the Ephesians is a question of much interest. Indeed, it has been ascertained that in seventy-eight out of the one hundred and fifty-five verses of Ephesians even the phraseology is almost the same. This similarity led De Wette to consider Ephesians as practically a verbose amplification of Colossians. Lists of parallel passages have been prepared by De Wette, Meyer, and others, in which the following parallel passages are cited:

Col. 1 : 22 . . . Eph. 1 : 4	Col. 3 : 1, 5 . . Eph. 4 : 19
Col. 1 : 14 . . . Eph. 1 : 7	Col. 3 : 8 f. . . Eph. 4 : 22 f.
Col. 1 : 20 . . . Eph. 1 : 10	Col. 3 : 8 f. . . Eph. 4 : 25 f.
Col. 1 : 3, 4 . Eph. 1 : 15, 17	Col. 3 : 8; 4 : 6 . Eph. 4 : 29
Col. 1 : 27 . . . Eph. 1 : 18	Col. 3 : 8 . . . Eph. 4 : 31
Col. 1 : 16 . . . Eph. 1 : 21	Col. 3 : 12 f. . . Eph. 4 : 32
Col. 1 : 18 f. . Eph. 1 : 22 f.	Col. 3 : 5 . . . Eph. 5 : 3
Col. 1 : 21 . . Eph. 2 : 1, 12	Col. 3 : 8 . . . Eph. 5 : 4
Col. 2 : 13 . . . Eph. 2 : 5	Col. 3 : 5 . . . Eph. 5 : 5
Col. 2 : 14 . . . Eph. 2 : 15	Col. 3 : 6 . . . Eph. 5 : 6
Col. 1 : 20 . . . Eph. 2 : 16	Col. 4 : 5 . . . Eph. 5 : 15
Col. 1 : 24 . . . Eph. 3 : 1	Col. 3 : 16 f. . . Eph. 5 : 19 f.
Col. 1 : 25 . . . Eph. 3 : 2	Col. 3 : 18 . . . Eph. 5 : 21
Col. 1 : 26 . . . Eph. 3 : 3	Col. 3 : 19 . . . Eph. 5 : 25
Col. 1 : 23, 25 . . Eph. 3 : 7	Col. 3 : 20 . . . Eph. 6 : 1
Col. 1 : 27 . . . Eph. 3 : 8 f.	Col. 3 : 21 . . . Eph. 6 : 4
Col. 1 : 10 . . . Eph. 4 : 1	Col. 3 : 22 f. . . Eph. 6 : 5 f.
Col. 3 : 12 f. . . Eph. 4 : 2	Col. 4 : 1 . . . Eph. 6 : 9
Col. 3 : 14 f. . . Eph. 4 : 3	Col. 4 : 2 f. . . Eph. 6 : 18 f.
Col. 2 : 19 . . Eph. 4 : 15 f.	Col. 4 : 7 f. . . Eph. 6 : 21 f.

H. J. Holtzmann has built on these parallelisms an elaborate and complicated theory as to the relations of the two epistles; but it is so improbable and fanciful that it is not taken seriously by anybody but himself. Paul's mind was full of what he had just written to the Colossians; and besides, he knew that what he had just written to one Asiatic church was probably suitable for others as well.

APPENDIX II

The Relation of Ephesians to Other New Testament Books

1 Peter.

There are many parallelisms between 1 Peter and Ephesians, both in matter and phraseology.

The language of 1 Pet. 1 : 3 is strikingly similar to that of Eph. 1 : 3. The general structure of the long sentences immediately following (1 Pet. 1 : 5–13; Eph. 1 : 5–15) is quite similar. The emphasis laid on "hope" in 1 Pet. 1 : 3–5 corresponds with that of Eph. 1 : 18–20; the object of the hope in both is "the inheritance," the ground of it in both is the resurrection of Christ, and in both the power of God is the means by which it is to be realized. There is a strong resemblance between 1 Pet. 2 : 4–6 and Eph. 2 : 18–22. 1 Pet. 3 : 18 is like Eph. 2 : 18 in thought and language, while 1 Pet. 3 : 22 is still more like Eph. 1 : 20–22. Again, 1 Pet. 1 : 20 is in substance and form like Eph. 3 : 9: while the unusual thought of the interest of angels in the plan of redemption is brought out in 1 Pet. 1 : 12 and Eph. 3 : 10. Compare also the paragraphs of 1 Pet. 2 : 18–3 : 7 with those of Eph. 5 : 22–6 : 9. The probability is that Peter was consciously or unconsciously influenced by the contents of Ephesians, and so, consciously or unconsciously, made use of some of the thoughts and even the expressions therein contained. But what of it? There is nothing strange in that. The probability is that he was similarly impressed by Paul's Epistle to the Romans also and that this showed itself in parts of his own Epistle; for there are striking parallelisms between 1 Peter and Romans. If it be said that it is not easy to understand how Peter could have been acquainted with Ephesians, it may be answered, as it has been answered, that "if 1 Peter was written by Silvanus (*i.e.* Silas, who was at other times an attendant of Paul) under the direction of Peter, which is probably the meaning of 1 Pet. 5 : 12, then the use of Paul's thoughts and language is sufficiently accounted for."

The Gospel of John.

Still more real and vital are the resemblances between the Epistle to the Ephesians and the Gospel of John. For here the resemblances are in thought, in the occurrence and recurrence of certain

great conceptions, such as the contrast between light and darkness, the dominating emphasis, in both the Epistle and the Gospel, on the ideas of *grace*, *knowledge*, *love*, the recurrence in both of the word *fulness* (pleroma), the relations between Christ and God the Father "before the foundation of the world" (comp. Jn. 17 : 24 with Eph. 1 : 4, 6). The work of salvation is in both that of *sanctifying* (cf. Jn. 17 : 17, 19 and Eph. 5 : 26), which is accomplished by means of *the word* (Jn. 15 : 3; 17 : 17 and Eph. 5 : 26). The regeneration of the soul is in both described as a *raising from the dead* (Jn. 5 : 21, 25, 28 and Eph. 2: 5, 6). In both are references to the descent of Christ from heaven and the ascent of Christ to heaven (Jn. 3 : 13, 31; 6 : 62 and Eph. 4 : 9, 10). The statement of Jn. 3 : 34, that the Father "giveth *not* the Spirit [to the Son] *by measure*," becomes intelligible when read in connection with Eph. 4: 7, "*unto each one of us* was the grace given *according to the measure* of the gift of Christ."

There is a sustained parallelism of thought between the seventeenth chapter of John and Ephesians.

There is nothing strange in supposing that "St. John read and valued St. Paul's writings," especially this epistle to the Ephesians, as John spent many years of his life at Ephesus, where it was preserved and was well known. Nor is there anything unnatural or strange in his being influenced by the great conceptions of this "supreme exposition of the meaning and aim of the Christian revelation."

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